



Sharing Swedenborg's "Sweets in Secret": The United Free-Will Baptist Church, ca. 1810–23

ON THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 28, 1912, about thirty thousand spectators lined Orthodox Street and Frankford Avenue to watch an illuminated procession of trade vehicles and floats demonstrating modern machinery, evidence of Frankford's role in making Philadelphia "the workshop of the world." The celebration concluded a week later with a parade highlighting Frankford's history. Representatives of the neighborhood's civic organizations and churches, arranged by founding date, followed the historical tableaux. The New Jerusalem Church of Frankford (Swedenborgian), one of Frankford's oldest congregations, chose to walk last to signify its "new era" of community service. The church had recently spearheaded the creation of an ecumenical social service cooperative

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designed to promote understanding among diverse community groups and provide healthy, engaging activities for neighborhood youth. Members of the New Jerusalem Sunday School, carrying an azure silk banner emblazoned with the church name and founding date, were greeted with hearty applause along the parade route.¹

Frankford's New Jerusalem congregation had not always enjoyed community support. In the spring of 1817, Thomas Boyle, a young Philadelphia laborer and "Free-Will Baptist" preacher, gathered a small band of religious seekers in Frankford "to wage war with satan [*sic*]." In a memoir published three years later, Boyle would describe how many who heard his emotional preaching "had a weeping time . . . sinners crying for mercy on every hand"; however, he would also document a hostile reaction among others: "the devil began to raise persecution on every hand—hell with its auxiliary engaged against us: even many who professed religion, poured out their wrath upon us in torrents."²

Boyle's account of his experiences in Frankford between 1817 and 1819 provides key insight into a virtually invisible, short-lived religious organization called the United Free-Will Baptist Church.³ The group ultimately embraced Swedenborgian theology, incorporating it within their own doctrinal framework without acknowledging its origins, illustrating a

¹ "Floats Epitomize Frankford History," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Nov. 2, 1912, 6; Guernsey A. Hallowell, "History of Frankford," in *Frankford: A Souvenir Booklet in Connection with the Historical and Industrial Celebration* (Philadelphia, 1912), 67, 70; "Saving Frankford's Young: Knowledge Extension Society Formed by Minister Grows Rapidly," *Philadelphia Record*, Sept. 29, 1912; "Frankford, Philadelphia," *New-Church Messenger*, Feb. 5, 1913, 92; "Frankford Society," *New-Church Messenger*, June 9, 1915, 469; "Frankford Opens Industrial Fete," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 29, 1912, 3.

² Thomas Boyle, *Some Account of the Rise and Progress of the Free Will Baptist Church in the Borough of Frankford and Its Vicinity* (Philadelphia, 1820), 81, 78, 82 (quotes). This publication is listed in Richard H. Shoemaker, comp., *A Checklist of American Imprints for 1820* (New York, 1964), 42; however, no copy of the original has been identified to date. The only known copy of this work is a transcript (type-written) made by New Jerusalem Church of Frankford member Guernsey A. Hallowell in 1930, from the original owned by Edna Randolph Worrell, great-granddaughter of a church founder and early minister, Isaac C. Worrell. It is held by the Swedenborg Library, Bryn Athyn College, Bryn Athyn, PA. In his preface, Hallowell indicates that his transcript, which includes his own footnotes, "is paged as the original book." Citations to this transcript use the page numbers identified by Hallowell. Boyle's account of the church's "Rise and Progress" encompasses pages 69–88. Hallowell transcribed the entire volume, which also included Boyle's introductory remarks and church "Doctrine" and "Discipline," which will be discussed later.

³ The name of Boyle's religious connection is spelled in various ways, including with a hyphen. To distinguish this independent sect from New England "Freewill Baptists" and Southern "Free Will Baptists," the spelling "Free-Will Baptists" is used, unless directly citing alternate spellings in titles or quotations. See William F. Davidson, "The National Association of Free Will Baptists," *The Baptist River: Essays on Many Tributaries of a Diverse Tradition*, ed. W. Glenn Jonas Jr. (Macon, GA, 2008), 129.

time when the New Jerusalem Church in America was "but a weakly plant, emitting its sweets in secret, unnoticed or despised." The New Jerusalem Church of Frankford, direct descendant of the Free-Will Baptists, preserved Boyle's account, saving the obscure sect that he helped found during the Second Great Awakening from the "spiritual abyss" and illuminating an evangelical side of Swedenborgianism that has generally been ignored.⁴

Scholars within and outside the New Church have studied Swedenborg's influence on the elite, eccentric, and esoteric, but few have included Swedenborgians among those who contributed to the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening.⁵ New Church theologian Robert Kirven has argued that Swedenborg was influential in the late eighteenth-century "Revolt against Deism," yet historian Eric Schlereth does not include Swedenborgians among the Protestant denominations that influenced American religious thought amid the growing deism of the early republic. Marion Bell acknowledges that "Philadelphia has been curiously neglected by historians" but does not begin her review of nineteenth-century revivalism in Philadelphia until the arrival of Charles Finney in the mid-1820s. She asserts that the city contained "a broad spectrum of religious life," but her 1819 city map does not identify the New Jerusalem Temple at Twelfth and George (now Sansom) Streets that opened for worship in 1817. Richard Carwardine also focuses primarily on Methodist revivalism and Charles Finney's "New Measures." He notes "revival movements" in

⁴ John Butler describes the similarly hidden history of Keithian Quakers in "Into Pennsylvania's Spiritual Abyss: The Rise and Fall of the Later Keithians, 1693–1703," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101 (1977): 151–70.

⁵ Sydney E. Ahlstrom cites Swedenborg's influence "in Transcendentalism and at Brook Farm, in spiritualism and the free love movement, in the craze for communitarian experiments, in faith healing, mesmerism, and a half-dozen medical cults; among great intellectuals, crude charlatans, and innumerable frontier quacks," in *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT, 2004), 483. Marguerite Block, in *The New Church in the New World: A Study of Swedenborgianism in America*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1984), provides a general overview, but does not include the church's relationship to other denominations. Richard Silver, in "The Spiritual Kingdom in America: The Influence of Emanuel Swedenborg on American Society and Culture, 1815–1860 (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1983), emphasizes a common view that Swedenborg's "odd philosophy" was "too complicated" and "hopelessly mystical," resulting in "an upper middle class, elite movement," a description that does not accurately represent the Frankford church (86–87, 301). Scott Trego Swank, in "The Unfettered Conscience: A Study of Sectarianism, Spiritualism, and Social Reform in the New Jerusalem Church, 1840–1870 (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1970), synthesizes Swedenborg's early reception in Europe and America, but focuses on the Lancaster (PA) society, founded in 1836 by "an elite group of self-assured men" (39), and its role in the *Kramph Will Case* that led to a schism in the New Church in the late nineteenth century.

Philadelphia between 1815 and 1818, but provides no details on these. Terry Bilhartz, in his study of Baltimore churches during the period, does acknowledge the city's New Jerusalem church. However, while affirming that most of its members "were low-propertied artisans," he only briefly discusses church leaders, concluding that Swedenborgians were unable to forge consensus with "mainline" Christian denominations, who "denounced" them "with one voice."⁶

Members of the New Jerusalem Church of Frankford were genealogical and theological descendants of those who took less traveled religious paths, those "on the margins of official Christendom" who exemplified the "alchemy of religious ideas" created when families of diverse cultures and faiths interacted within Penn's experiment of religious toleration.⁷ Long before Charles Finney coined the phrase, the sparsely populated and geographically fluid rural regions surrounding the city experienced an extended religious "burning over," allowing the continual regeneration of spiritual lives while keeping family and community roots intact. By the time Swedenborg was born in 1688, his Lutheran countrymen had been in the region fifty years, and the "cauldron of religious doctrines, rites, and practices" was bubbling in the Delaware Valley.⁸ In the year of his birth, the Germantown Friends' protest against slavery was presented at a meeting held in the home of English Quaker Richard Worrell in Oxford or "Tacony" Township, and the first permanent Baptist church

⁶ Robert H. Kirven, "Emanuel Swedenborg and the Revolt against Deism" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1965); Eric R. Schlereth, *An Age of Infidels: The Politics of Religious Controversy in the Early United States* (Philadelphia, 2013); Marion L. Bell, *Crusade in the City: Revivalism in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Lewisburg, PA, 1977), 34–48, 15 (quote) (The temple is identified on Robert Desilver's 1819 *Plan of the City of Philadelphia and Environs . . . Inscribed to William Sansom . . .* [Philadelphia, 1819]); Richard Carwardine, "The Second Great Awakening in the Urban Centers: An Examination of Methodism and the 'New Measures,'" *Journal of American History* 59 (1972): 328, 340; Terry D. Bilhartz, *Urban Religion and the Second Great Awakening: Church and Society in Early National Baltimore* (Rutherford, NJ, 1986), 24, 133.

⁷ John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York, 1998), 11; Janet Moore Lindman, *Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2008), 13; J. William Frost, "Pennsylvania Institutes Religious Liberty, 1682–1860," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 112 (1988): 323–47. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania holds most of the extant records of the New Jerusalem Church of Frankford, which begin in 1824. No church registers exist for the Free-Will Baptists. Names identified in this study include only those noted in Boyle's memoir or other Free-Will Baptist publications and signatories of the 1819 incorporation.

⁸ Israel Acrelius, *A History of New Sweden; or, The Settlements on the River Delaware*, trans. William M. Reynolds (Philadelphia, 1874), x–xiii; quote, Lindman, *Bodies of Belief*, 11.

in Pennsylvania was founded on nearby Pennepek Creek.⁹ Within the next few years, the antislavery stance of many Quakers and their German Mennonite neighbors was fueled by the controversial George Keith, whose arguments against contemporary Quaker beliefs and practices forced many dissenting Friends, generally "poor and modest" artisans and farmers, into Anglican, Baptist, or "Christian Quaker" congregations.¹⁰ The Oxford Township meetinghouse that served all of these groups in the late seventeenth century became Trinity Episcopal Church in 1713.¹¹ Within the next decade, the German Baptist Brethren, or "Dunkers," joined fellow Crefelders in Germantown and Frankford, celebrating the first of their unique baptisms in the Wissahickon Creek on Christmas Day 1723.¹² By the 1770s, the doctrine of universal restoration, "the belief that an all-good and all-powerful God saves all souls," and a central tenet of the German Pietists, was gaining ground in Philadelphia. Jacob Duché, assistant rector

⁹The area in which Frankford is situated has been known by several names. The original Lenape name was interpreted by the Swedes as "Tacony," but the township was later called "Oxford" or "Dublin." Arthur H. Jenkins and Ann R. Jenkins, in "A Short History of Abington Meeting: With an Account of the Building of the Abington Meeting House," *Bulletin of the Friends Historical Association* 22 (1933): 116–17, note that early meetings for Friends "in the Tacony and Poquessing valleys" were "in the sections which we now call Frankford and Byberry"; Oxford Monthly Meeting was later called Abington, but was also referred to as Dublin. In early 1687, the Dublin Monthly Meeting decided to hold meetings "at the house of Richard Worrell, Jr., in Lower Dublin"; "The German Friends," *Friend: A Religious and Literary Journal* 17 (1844): 125–26, 265–67. The slavery protest was delivered to "the monthly meeting held at Richard Worrell's"; Kenneth Morgan, ed., *Slavery in America: A Reader and Guide* (Athens, GA, 2005), 370. Lindman, *Bodies of Belief*, 11–13; Eve B. Weeks, Morgan Edwards, and Mary B. Warren, eds., *Materials towards a History of the Baptists* (Danielsville, GA, 1984), 1:5–7; David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America . . .* (Boston, 1813), 1:580–81; Horatio Gates Jones, *Historical Sketch of the Lower Dublin (or Pennepek) Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa. . . .* (Morrisania, NY, 1869). Pennepek's short-lived predecessor at Cold Spring will be noted later.

¹⁰ Butler, "Rise and Fall of the Later Keithians," 155. For an overview of the conflict, see J. William Frost, comp., *The Keithian Conflict in Early Pennsylvania* (Norwood, PA, 1980); Jon Butler, "'Gospel Order Improved': The Keithian Schism and the Exercise of Quaker Ministerial Authority in Pennsylvania," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 31 (1974): 431–52, esp. 448, for reference to Keithians in Frankford; and Weeks, Edwards, and Warren, *Materials towards a History of the Baptists*, 27–31. John W. Jordan, ed., *Colonial Families of Philadelphia* (New York, 1911), 2:1093, notes that "most" of the members of Oxford Friends' Meeting became adherents of "George Keith in his schism of 1702."

¹¹In addition to sources cited above, see Edward Y. Buchanan, *Historical Sketch of the Parish of Trinity Church, Oxford, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1857); and George Harrison Fisher, "Trinity Church, Oxford, Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 27 (1903): 279–95.

¹²John Lewis Gillin, *The Dunkers: A Sociological Interpretation* (New York, 1906); Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park, PA, 2003). Richard E. Wentz, in "The American Character and the American Revolution: A Pennsylvania German Sampler," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44 (1976): 115–31, provides an overview of the importance of the Pietist tradition and religious folkways among Pennsylvania Germans of all sects.

of Christ Church and later a Swedenborg receiver, was strongly influenced by the Dunkers, as was Elhanan Winchester, whose sermons on universalism while pastor of First Baptist Church in Philadelphia resulted in a formal schism of the “Universal Baptists” from the traditionally Calvinist Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1786.¹³ In 1792, Ralph Mather, a Swedenborgian minister from Liverpool, settled in Germantown and established the first regular meetings for New Jerusalem church worship in Philadelphia. Like many of the Lancashire artisans who were drawn to the works of Swedenborg, Mather was a reader of the mystical writer Jacob Boehme, a fact that may have influenced his decision to live among German Pietists in America.¹⁴

Thomas Boyle was born in the midst of this cacophony of religious messages in the last decades of the eighteenth century, but few clues exist to illuminate his early spiritual journey. References to him in New Jerusalem publications illustrate his character but provide little biographical information. The tone of his narrative, as well as references in the census and city directories, suggest he was a “mechanick preacher,” raised in the city of Philadelphia and likely trained as a wheelwright. He and his family appear to have lived in racially mixed, working-class neighborhoods in the North and South Mulberry Wards or in Southwark.¹⁵ Linking him to a “Free-Will Baptist” community is more problematic. By the

¹³ Ann Lee Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America, 1770–1880* (New York, 2001), 6; Clarke Garrett, “The Spiritual Odyssey of Jacob Duché,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 119 (1975): 143–55; David Spencer, *Early Baptists of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1877), 29, 130–33; Richard Eddy, *Universalism in America: A History* (Boston, 1884), 1:28, 213–57, 400. Edwin Stone, in *Biography of Rev. Elhanan Winchester* (Boston, 1836), 29–34, notes the influence of Pietist Georg Paul Siegvölck’s *The Everlasting Gospel*, published in English in Germantown in 1753. Essays by Duché and Winchester illustrate the tension between religious freedom and religious toleration. Duché describes Philadelphia as a “happy asylum” for “[a]lmost every sect in Christendom,” but Winchester laments that the city has made his congregation “Outcasts” because of their non-traditional beliefs; [Jacob Duché], *Observations on a Variety of Subjects, Literary, Moral and Religious . . .* (Philadelphia, 1774), 9; Elhanan Winchester, *The Outcasts Comforted: A Sermon Delivered at the University of Philadelphia, January 4, 1782, to the Members of the Baptist Church, Who Have Been Rejected by Their Brethren, for Holding the Doctrine of the Final Restoration of All Things* (Philadelphia, 1782).

¹⁴ Carl Theophilus Odhner, *Annals of the New Church* (Philadelphia, 1898), 131. Mather brought Swedenborg to Liverpool audiences through open-air preaching in 1786, founding the first New Church there in 1791. When his Germantown congregation dissolved about 1798, he started one in Baltimore, where the German Dunkers permitted the use of their hall. See Clarke Garrett, “Swedenborg and the Mystical Enlightenment in Late Eighteenth-Century England,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45 (1984): 77–81; and Odhner, *Annals of the New Church*, 60, 198.

¹⁵ Boyle, *Some Account*, 80. In 1820, Thomas Boyle (aged twenty-six to forty-four) and family were in Frankford; another Thomas Boyle (over forty-five) and family were in South Mulberry Ward. A

mid-eighteenth century, the Philadelphia Baptist Association's "strongly Calvinistic Confession" dominated the theology of Baptist churches in the Delaware Valley and beyond, despite the early influence of English General Baptists or "Free-Willers."¹⁶ Scholars of the Free Will Baptist denomination in America differ over the historical primacy of Benjamin Randall and the New England Freewill Baptists versus Paul Palmer and the early General Baptists of North Carolina. However, Randall's Freewill Baptists had no churches south of New England before 1810. Missionary John Colby came to Pennsylvania that year, but only to the far northeast and west. General Baptist Paul Palmer may have preached in New Jersey in the eighteenth century, but no specific congregation planted by him has been identified in the mid-Atlantic. Whether Boyle's congregation was aware of these groups is unknown, but no evidence of their connection has been discovered and no congregation of "Free Will" or "Freewill" Baptists has been identified in the Delaware Valley prior to the establishment of a congregation by the "United Free-Will Baptists" in Philadelphia in 1814.¹⁷

Thomas Boyle described himself as a Baptist when he arrived in Frankford in 1817, but the content and style of his memoir suggest that he

Thomas Boyle, laborer, is listed in city directories, 1810–20, on Juniper Street near Mulberry (Arch) Street. In 1813, Thomas Boyle, "jun," wheelwright, was either the younger Thomas or a third generation. Three Thomas Boyles are in the 1811 directory and the 1810 census: laborer Thomas Boyle (over forty-five) and family on the alley behind Juniper Street, South Mulberry Ward; wheelwright Thomas Boyle and a woman, both about twenty-five, Pennington Alley, North Mulberry Ward; and an older Thomas Boyle and a woman in West Southwark. Gary B. Nash describes several free black families living in the Mulberry wards in 1810, including on Pennington Alley, in *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 163. Bruce Laurie notes that early nineteenth-century industrialization "pushed working people and the poor into cheaper housing in the newly emerging suburban districts," in *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800–1850* (Philadelphia, 1980), 9.

¹⁶Prior to the association's "Calvinistic Confession . . . the Arminian Baptists had been the stronger in New England, and the colonies of New York and New Jersey" (Henry C. Vedder, *A Short History of the Baptists*, new and illus. ed. [Philadelphia, 1907], 306). The "Rhode Island Yearly Meeting of General Baptists" was organized in 1670; see John Sparks, *The Roots of Appalachian Christianity: The Life and Legacy of Elder Shubal Stearns* (Lexington, KY, 2001), 6. Emissaries of the Philadelphia Baptist Association converted General Baptists in North Carolina; see Davidson, "National Association of Free Will Baptists," 131–35. "Free-Willers" was an early English term for non-Calvinists; see I. D. Stewart, *The History of the Freewill Baptists for Half a Century* (Dover, NH, 1862), 31.

¹⁷Davidson, "National Association of Free Will Baptists," 129–39, gives an overview of the history of both groups. See also Ruth B. Bordin, "The Sect to Denomination Process in America: The Freewill Baptist Experience," *Church History* 34 (1965): 79–80; Sparks, *Roots of Appalachian Christianity*, 19–20; and Stewart, *History of the Freewill Baptists*, 326–28. Stewart states, "The early history of the Freewill Baptists in Pennsylvania is more deficient than that of any other State" (328). Colby first refers to visiting the Delaware Valley area in late 1817; see *The Life, Experience, and Travels of John Colby, Preacher of the Gospel* (Lowell, MA, 1838), 46.

likely had experienced Methodist revivalism. He permeates his narrative with evangelical language, a seamless blend of biblical quotes and missionary message. Many in his congregation experienced “the love of God shed abroad in their hearts,” shunned the “beggarly elements of the world,” and were “awakened to a sense of their lost estate.” He may allude to his own spiritual conversion in the introductory remarks to his account, when he lauds the “venerable [Francis] Asbury, [who], in conjunction with hundreds of his brethern [*sic*] and spiritual children, have gone forth as flaming heralds, and God by them has wrought a happy change in tens of thousands.” Boyle also implemented the Methodist form of evangelical structure. In addition to public preaching, he established “prayer band” meetings, a system John Wesley had adapted from the Moravians. Influenced by evangelical camp meetings, Methodist prayer meetings, even in urban areas, were becoming more revivalistic and emotional, focusing on “instantaneous conversion,” rather than the sustained commitment engendered by traditional class meetings.¹⁸

Boyle may have been affiliated formally with a Methodist church in Philadelphia prior to 1817. On October 25, 1806, a Thomas Boyle was admitted as a member of Union Methodist Church, after the customary six-month probation period. On the surface, Union seems an unlikely fit. A governance controversy at St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church in 1801 resulted in the creation of the independent Union Methodist Society. Union’s primarily middle-class membership was “more exclusive” and less prone to emotional revivalism than St. George’s, whose own discriminatory practices led to the secession of African American members to form Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1794. This Thomas may have joined Union because of his friendship with Ann Yarnall, a member of a class led by Union founders Lambert Wilmer and John Hood. On November 23, 1809, Thomas Boyle and Ann Yarnall were married at Union by Rev. Lemuel Green.¹⁹ Green also served Ebenezer Methodist Church in Southwark, which, like Mother Bethel, offered more enthusiastic, lay-

¹⁸ Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760–1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), 20–26; Boyle, *Some Account*, 71, 79–83; Jonathan C. David, ed., *Together Let Us Sweetly Live: The Singing and Praying Bands* (Urbana, IL, 2007), 6; Philip F. Hardt, “The Evangelistic and Catechetical Role of the Class Meeting in Early New York City Methodism,” *Methodist History* 38 (1999): 23–25. Also, Boyle’s New York colleagues in the connection were originally Methodists, as will be discussed later.

¹⁹ “Union Methodist Episcopal Church Records,” *Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1708–1985* (from HSP microfilm), www.Ancestry.com. Dee Andrews, “The People and the

driven worship than St. George's or Union, with "fervid" preaching, "warm zeal," and singing with "quickness and animation." Like Mother Bethel, Ebenezer welcomed "wild and successful" Lorenzo Dow to preach.²⁰

Thomas Boyle is virtually invisible during the war years, 1812–14, but, like other Philadelphians, his trade was surely affected by the war-time embargo, the naval blockade of the Delaware, and the panic of 1814. He apparently did not serve in a Philadelphia militia unit.²¹ The spiritual journey that ultimately led to his conviction of believers' baptism, as well as Swedenborgian views of the Trinity and atonement, likely began during these years. He may have been drawn to the Lombard Street church of the Universalist Baptists, whose profession of belief in one God held a unique "Trinitarian plank" reflecting the doctrine of John Murray, "the father of Universalism." According to an early historian of the Universalist movement, "Murray's idea of the supreme deity of Christ alone, who is Father, Word, or Holy Ghost, according to manifestation, . . . was identical with the views of Swedenborg on this subject." However, controversy at the church during the War of 1812 and the suicide of their minister in 1814 led to the closure of the Lombard Street church in 1814 for two years. With the arrival of Abner Kneeland as pastor in 1818, "the Trinitarian theory was superseded by the Unitarian."²²

Boyle's spiritual questioning may have been fueled by the sermons and publications of radical religious and political reformer Elias Smith, whose *Herald of Gospel Liberty* was published in Philadelphia from 1811 to 1814.

Preachers of St. George's: An Anatomy of a Methodist Schism," in *Rethinking Methodist History: A Bicentennial Historical Consultation*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Kenneth E. Rowe (Nashville, TN, 1985), 125–33; Andrews notes, "A probationer could be admitted on trial at [Union] only if recommended by the leader of the class to which the person wished to belong" (128). Boyle has not been identified on a Union class list, but he previously may have been a member at St. George's. A Thomas Boyle was crossed off the membership list at St. George's exactly a year later than the one above joined Union; "Old St. George's Methodist Episcopal Records," *Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records*. Thomas Boyle clearly came to Frankford with a family, but the name of his wife or descendants have not been identified.

²⁰ *History of Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church of Southwark, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1890), 40, 48; Peggy Dow, *Vicissitudes Exemplified; Or, The Journey of Life* (New York, 1814), 102; Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 45.

²¹ Russell F. Weigley, Nicholas B. Wainwright, and Edwin Wolf, eds., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York, 1982), 255. Boyle is not listed in *Muster Rolls of the Pennsylvania Volunteers in the War of 1812–1814*, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, ed. Samuel Hazard et al. (Philadelphia and Harrisburg, PA, 1852–1949), 2nd ser., vol. 12.

²² J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609–1883* (Philadelphia, 1884), 1446; Eddy, *Universalism in America*, 1:13, 308; Abel C. Thomas, *A Century of Universalism in Philadelphia and New York . . .* (Philadelphia, 1872), 56 (quote), 68–75.

In early nineteenth-century Philadelphia, the closest thing to a “Free-Will Baptist” church was likely Mount Zion Christian. Founded in 1807 on Smith’s unique brand of political theology, the congregation built its first meetinghouse on the southeast corner of Sixth and Christian Streets in the rough outskirts of Southwark.²³ Historically the residence of those employed in shipping and trade, Southwark’s role was solidified with the creation of the federal Navy Yard in 1801. Baptisms were often performed in the Delaware River at the Navy Yard to accommodate the neighborhood’s rising population. The popular William Staughton of First Baptist Church held open-air services “under the venerable willows” there from 1805 to 1811, and Frederick Plummer of Mount Zion Christian reported preaching to possibly “ten thousand souls” at the Navy Yard in 1811. One participant remarked, “[I]f the true God was ever worshipped in spirit anywhere in Philadelphia,” the Navy Yard was that place.²⁴

A severe critic of Methodist hierarchy, Elias Smith often reported on the attraction of his “Christian” theology to Philadelphia Methodists. Thomas Boyle may have been aware of an incident between Methodist minister Richard Sneath and “Christian” minister Frederick Plummer in April 1810. According to Smith, since the Christian Church’s arrival in Southwark, Sneath had “thundered out his slander against that small body, from the pulpit of Ebenezer [Methodist]; warning the inhabitants of Southwark, not to give anything to them, nor even hear them, as they were *Excommunicated Methodists* and *Backsliders*.” Despite Sneath’s warning, some Methodists took Plummer’s advice to “read the Scriptures of truth instead of their Discipline” and were convinced of the need to be “Buried in Baptism.” When Methodist minister Thomas Sargent refused to baptize them, as they already “had been sprinkled,” Plummer complied with their request. The Methodist leadership tried, and ultimately con-

²³ “Christians” and Freewill Baptists were “kindred sects” (Michael G. Kenny, *The Perfect Law of Liberty: Elias Smith and the Providential History of America* [Washington, DC, 1994], esp. 46, 92, 232); Nathan O. Hatch, “The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People,” *Journal of American History* 67 (1980): 545–67; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1402–3; “Publish, and Conceal Not,” *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, Aug. 30, 1811, 315. “[N]o street below South Street was laid out beyond Fifth Street until after 1807. West of this, Southwark was but sparsely settled and the vicinity was infested by gangs of footpads and ruffians” (M. Antonia Lynch, “The Old District of Southwark in the County of Philadelphia,” *Philadelphia History: Consisting of Papers Read before the City History Society of Philadelphia* [Philadelphia, 1917], 89).

²⁴ Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1309; “Letter from Elder F. Plummer,” *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, May 25, 1810, 182; William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, vol. 6, *Baptist* (New York, 1860), 343–44.

victed, the renegades of "Breach of Discipline," or, in Smith's words, "for obeying the word of God."²⁵

A contentious schism within Mount Zion Christian over the biblical authority for legal incorporation, as well as personal tragedy, compelled Elias Smith to cease publication of *Herald of Gospel Liberty* in February 1814 and return to New England, concluding his "disastrous experience in Philadelphia."²⁶ Had he remained, the *Herald* certainly would have reported on an obscure sect, whose "Elders and Preachers," John Elliott and Samuel Stevens, "of the Free-Will Baptist Society in the city of New York," arrived in Philadelphia in November 1814.²⁷ Their reasons for leaving the Methodists were based on experiences similar to the controversy between Sneath and Plummer, illustrating that, despite the popularity of Methodist Arminianism, other issues of doctrine—such as mode of baptism, the nature of the Trinity, and the means and extent of religious "salvation"—were significant to those who were free to search scripture for themselves.²⁸

In 1809, Elliott, Stevens, and "a number of young men belonging to the [Methodist] society in New York" formed a series of prayer meetings "for the purpose of doing good." Revivalistic in tone, with spiritual songs and fervid prayers, the meetings were successful—"a number of souls were converted to God and changed from the error of their way," they reported. New York's Methodist leadership, which, according to theologian Philip Hardt, "set high standards for its probationary members" and "stressed gradual conversion" through formal class meetings, would have watched these sessions carefully. The young men soon discovered "truths" beyond those that prompted their conversion to Methodism. Stevens, describing the group's epiphany regarding baptism, explained: "It then appeared plain

²⁵ *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, Aug. 30, 1811, 315. As noted later, Boyle's colleagues in New York were accused of being "Christians" by those who heard their preaching.

²⁶ Kenny, *Perfect Law of Liberty*, 189–95. In *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, Feb. 25, 1813, 461, Smith describes the schism, noting "those who first called themselves the *Christian church* had been Methodists."

²⁷ John Elliott and Samuel Stevens, *The Latest Collection of Original and Select Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (New York, 1813), title page. John Elliott and Samuel Stevens, *The Discipline of the United Freewill Baptist Church, Together with Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the Use of Its Members* (Philadelphia, 1819), 3, 11.

²⁸ Scholars of Methodist reform have attributed conflict within the church primarily to issues of church government. See Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (1957; repr. New York, 1965), 25; John Paris, *History of the Methodist Protestant Church* (Baltimore, 1849), 18; Sarah Brooks Blair, "Reforming Methodism: 1800–1820" (PhD diss., Drew University, 2008), 184; and Andrews, "People and the Preachers of St. George's," 131.

to us, from many passages of scripture, that immersion was the only way to follow our Lord to Jordan, and in the liquid grave to be buried with our Lord and Master." Although Elliott and Stevens later asserted "boldly" that they never were "in connexion with the christian society," they may have been influenced by "ever-proselytizing immersionists" such as Frederick Plummer, who reported baptizing in the North [Hudson] River in May 1810.²⁹

John Elliott, reputedly a Methodist lay preacher in England prior to his emigration, was in his mid-twenties with the nearly stereotypical physical features of a wild evangelist: "dark complex[ion], dark hair," and "black eyes."³⁰ According to Stevens's account, Elliott took his request for immersion baptism to a Methodist elder, who refused to baptize anyone who had been christened as a child. The elder "gave him a book" to "satisfy him" and then began preaching sermons "pointed against baptism by immersion." But the young men were adamant, and the New York Methodist preachers, in Stevens's words, "finally had to perform a solemn ordinance they did not believe in." They held baptisms at the waterside, but offered only pouring or sprinkling to demonstrate their "disapprobation" of immersion.³¹ The Methodists, viewing baptism as a "theological abstraction," may have believed that offering the rite "in any way the candidate preferred" was an example of religious liberality, but for those convinced of immersion as a means to salvation, a way of controlling "their own spiritual destiny," it was unacceptable.³² Rev. William White, pastor of Philadelphia's Second Baptist Church, wrote of his displeasure at a similar Methodist baptism at the Delaware River in 1808. White accused Methodist minister Joseph Totten of using the event to preach that the two scriptural modes of bap-

²⁹ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 3, 10; Hardt, "Evangelistic and Catechetical Role of the Class Meeting," 17; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 201–2; "Religious Intelligence," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, June 22, 1810, 192. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, in *American Methodist Worship* (New York, 2001), discusses the history and traditions surrounding baptism in the American Methodist church in chapter 4, "The Rites of Christian Initiation," 82–117. On pages 98–99, she notes the increasing antagonism of Methodists toward the practice of immersion, indicating that Methodist preachers hoped to "debunk the ever-proselytizing immersionists" (98).

³⁰ Elliott is believed to be Rev. John Elliott who became involved with the Churches of God in Lancaster and then Reformed Methodism. C. H. Forney, in *History of the Churches of God in the United States of North America* (Harrisburg, PA, 1914), 315, says, "John Elliott was an Englishman, eminent as a preacher and theologian. Where and when he entered the ministry the records do not reveal." Elliott's description is cited in Kenneth Scott, comp., *British Aliens in the United States during the War of 1812* (Baltimore, 1979), 107.

³¹ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 4.

³² Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 17.

tism were "sprinkling and pouring," rather than accommodating the participants' "liberty of conscience."³³

By 1810, John Elliott had left the New York Methodist society over the baptism controversy and rented a house to hold meetings. Stevens, only nineteen and by his own admission "a methodist of the strictest sort," briefly remained one of Elliott's "greatest foes," believing "if we could knock him down, we, as methodists, should carry our point." Eager to save his friend and defend "the name of a methodist in the field of battle," Stevens and other "brethren [went] to pull down the house he had taken to worship God in." Despite this assault, Stevens and Elliott renewed their friendship and participated in one another's meetings. According to Stevens, the Methodist leadership then warned their members "that if any of them should be caught going to Elliott and Stevens's meetings, they should be turned out of their society." By 1811, Stevens and others "who thought it no crime to go where they found the Lord" left the Methodists. Using the language of liberty common to religious dissent of the time, they "were possessed of too much of the republican spirit to be thus tyrannized over by their bigoted leaders."³⁴ Unable to join a New York City Baptist congregation because of the "doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation," they formed the "United Freewill Baptist Church" in June 1811. Elliott and Stevens became elders and preachers and named three deacons and four trustees.³⁵

³³ William White, *Christian Baptism: Exhibiting Various Proofs That the Immersion of Believers in Water Is the Only Baptism* . . . (Burlington, NJ, 1808), 7. White decries the "utmost enthusiasm" (iii) with which "pedobaptists" had embraced former Baptist Peter Edwards's *Candid Reasons for Renouncing the Principles of Antipædobaptism: . . . Containing a Short Method with the Baptists* (London, 1795), which was likely the book given to Elliott. The "Short Method" was later included in an 1814 Methodist publication giving a "fuller authoritative statement on baptism" (Tucker, *American Methodist Worship*, 98).

³⁴ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 6–8. The location of the house where Elliott was preaching is unknown, but it was likely in the working-class neighborhood near Duane Street Methodist Church. See Paul Gilje, *Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763–1834* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987), 208–10, for a description of a similar incident in the neighborhood in 1810. Hatch, in *Democratization of American Christianity*, 35, notes the "primacy of the individual conscience" in the message of nineteenth-century "populist preachers."

³⁵ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 7–9, 14. The deacons were sailmaker Ebenezer Whiting, teacher Stukeley Hymes, and Rulef Duryea, likely of the Reformed Dutch Church of Oyster Bay, Long Island. New York City directories, real estate valuations, 1819 jury census, and newspapers confirm that Elliott held property on Duane Street, between Augustus and Cross, in the area soon called Five Points, "the most infamous section of the city"; Gilje, *Road to Mobocracy*, 240. Usually identified as a "grocer," Elliott may have used the property as a storefront church.

The Free-Will Baptists also questioned the traditional view of the Trinity, “the doctrine of three persons in one God, and one God in three persons,” which they considered “impossible . . . to prove from the scriptures.” It is unclear when their views began to take on a Swedenborgian tone. Elliott may have met the founders of New York City’s New Jerusalem society, which rented a meetinghouse on nearby James Street. In early 1812, society members Edward Riley, an English musician and printer, and Samuel Woodworth, an American printer, began publishing the *Halcyon Luminary and Theological Repository*, “the first American New Church monthly magazine.” Members of the Free-Will Baptist church likely would have been attracted to Woodworth’s explanation of Swedenborg’s perspective on the Trinity: “There is one true God [who] is the Lord Jesus Christ, at once Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”³⁶

In late 1812, Elliott and Stevens traveled to North Providence, Rhode Island, where they spent eighteen months preaching and baptizing. Missionary John Colby was evangelizing for Randall’s “Freewill Baptists” in the northwestern part of the state at the same time, but there is no evidence of the two groups having any connection with one another.³⁷ According to Elliott and Stevens, they baptized “a great number” and “ordained three preachers.”³⁸ They also likely completed *The Latest Collection of Original and Select Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, published in New York in 1813, a contribution to the “hymnodic revolution” sweeping America in the early republic. Their choices provide a glimpse of the energetic, revivalistic worship that they surely favored. Casting a wide net, they included traditional hymns by Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts; North American revival hymns by Mohegan Presbyterian Samson Occom and Nova Scotia “New Light” Henry Alline; works by English evangelists,

³⁶ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 5. “History of the New York Society of the New Church,” 1, [n.d.], transcript of J. P. Stuart’s Scrapbook, General Convention Records, Academy of the New Church Archives (Bryn Athyn, PA), notes an unnamed Methodist minister who officiated briefly. Swedenborg’s view of the Trinity is expressed in “Doctrines of the New Jerusalem,” *Halcyon Luminary* 1 (1812): 54.

³⁷ In June 1814, the “United Freewill Baptists” in North Providence stated that Elliott had preached there “about eighteen months” (Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 14). Colby stopped briefly in Providence in September 1812 and then traveled to Burrillville, where in December 1814 he formed the first “Freewill Baptist church” in the state (A. D. Williams, *The Rhode Island Freewill Baptist Pulpit* [Boston, 1852], 13–14).

³⁸ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 11. Deacons Goliah Williams and Joseph Angell and Elder James W. Angell likely are descendants of Roger Williams and Thomas Angell. James’s children may be architect Truman Angell and Mary A. Angell, Brigham Young’s wife (Orson Whitney, *History of Utah* [Salt Lake City, 1892–1904], 4:60–61).

such as Baptist Samuel Medley and Anglican John Newton; and contemporary camp meeting songs by Methodists Caleb Jarvis Taylor and John Adam Granade, Baptist John Leland, and Mother Bethel A.M.E. founder Richard Allen.³⁹

Elliott and Stevens left for Philadelphia in November 1814, establishing a Free-Will Baptist society there on December 31, 1814. Despite some local opposition, the society grew steadily, perhaps experiencing the "very animating revival" sweeping Philadelphia at the time. Coinciding with America's victory at the Battle of New Orleans and the national day of prayer and thanksgiving in January 1815, the revival began as a nonsectarian movement at Princeton College. In February 1816, James Patterson, an energetic young Presbyterian minister in the Northern Liberties, described a "novel" revival scene for his denomination: "The whole congregation was bathed in tears, and the house seemed to be filled as with a rushing mighty wind." Seeing that "the state of the public mind was highly favourable to religious investigation," the New Jerusalem Church in Philadelphia expanded its evangelism in 1816, creating the American Society for Disseminating the Doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church and laying the cornerstone for its temple. The temple's consecration in January 1817 coincided with the debut of a quarterly publication, the *New Jerusalem Church Repository*.⁴⁰

By April 1817, even the fledgling Free-Will Baptists were able to construct a modest frame meetinghouse on Queen Street, between Fifth and Sixth Streets, in Southwark, "through the blessing of God and the kind aid of the citizens." The choice of Southwark for the church's first permanent location in Philadelphia likely reflects the audience with whom their message most resonated. Their new building was in a rapidly developing area of Southwark, characterized by inexpensive frame dwellings that would

³⁹ For the rise of evangelical folk hymnody during the Second Great Awakening, see Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 146–61. Hymn authorship is primarily from <http://www.hymnary.org>.

⁴⁰ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 11; Joshua Bradley, *Accounts of Religious Revivals in Many Parts of the United States from 1815 to 1818*. (Albany, NY, 1819), 22–25, 252–57, quote 257; "Religious Intelligence," *Newark (NJ) Centinel of Freedom*, Apr. 25, 1815, 1–2; Robert Adair, *Memoir of Rev. James Patterson* (Philadelphia, 1840), 61. *New Jerusalem Church Repository for the Years 1817 & 1818* 1 (1817–18): 20–29, quote 27; William Strickland's drawing of the temple is the frontispiece of this volume. John McComb Jr. sketched the temple in 1822; see James F. O'Gorman, "A New York Architect Visits Philadelphia in 1822," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 117 (1993): 162–64, 172. The Academy of Natural Sciences purchased the "neat Gothic building" in 1826 to create "a commodious Hall" for its meetings and receptions (*National Gazette*, May 23, 1826, 2).

accommodate a steady influx of free African Americans and immigrants over the next several decades. Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church had purchased a burial ground in the 400 block of Queen Street in 1810, but its primary house of worship at Sixth and Lombard was several blocks north, within the city limits. Members of Southwark's African American community worshipped at First African Presbyterian Church on South Seventh Street, but First African Baptist Church was nearly two miles away near Vine Street and, like the Presbyterian church, would have embraced at least moderate Calvinism. Nearby Mount Zion Christian Church, now under Frederick Plummer's leadership and known for its attraction to "dissenters from all [other sects]," was likely a strong competitor. Like Mount Zion, the Free-Will Baptists used the Navy Yard for baptisms, noting in their advertisement for the new meetinghouse: "The public are likewise informed that there will be baptizing on next Lord's Day in the afternoon, between the hours of four and five o'clock, at the Navy Yard." Samuel Stevens's account stressed the church's inclusivity: "In this meeting house seats are all free, and we invite all our fellow citizens to worship the Lord there."⁴¹

Elliott and Stevens seem to have kept a low public profile in Southwark, but, within days of the newspaper notice announcing the opening of the Queen Street meetinghouse, Thomas Boyle emerged from the shadows. His account begins in April 1817, when Ellen Simmons, "who resided near the sixth mile stone" of the newly completed Bristol Turnpike, called at his home with a "pressing invitation to come to her neighbourhood, and hold a meeting." Ellen's husband, David P. Simmons, had recently purchased a seventy-six-acre farm along the Oxford Pike, having sold his successful packing business at Eleventh near Spruce. Simmons and brother-in-law Condry Raguet, founder of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society, had patented an invention for baling with iron in 1809. Raguet was also a

⁴¹ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 11. A year after the meetinghouse opened, the block was still largely undeveloped; *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, July 6, 1818, 4, announced the sale of ten lots on Queen Street between Fifth and Sixth. Terry Buckalew, blog, *Friends of Bethel Burying Ground*, <http://preciousdust.blogspot.com>. *The Directory of African American Religious Bodies: A Compendium by the Howard University School of Divinity*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC, 1995), 29, notes that African American Baptists experienced "a gradual, barely perceptible drift toward the Arminian point of view . . . the trend was evident during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century." For the location of these churches, see James Mease, *Picture of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1811), 219, 221; and Thomas Wilson, *Picture of Philadelphia, for 1824* (Philadelphia, 1823), 45 (including quote on Mount Zion). The ad for the Free-Will Baptist church is in "The Public," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, Apr. 3, 1817, 3.

founder of the American Society for Disseminating the Doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church and a contributor to the *New Jerusalem Church Repository*. Boyle's account provides no clues as to why Ellen Simmons was so interested in his coming to Frankford. His views on the Trinity were already leaning in a Swedenborgian direction, so he may have read about New Jerusalem doctrine in the *Repository* or visited the temple and met David and Ellen Simmons or Condé Raguet. Ellen must have known him—or of him—and felt his religious views and preaching style would be a valuable addition to Frankford's spiritual life.⁴²

On May 18, 1817, Thomas Boyle preached for the first time in Oxford Township at the home of Ellen Simmons's neighbor, the "Widow Fisher." Mrs. Fisher was likely Sarah Dungan Fisher, widow of shoemaker Benjamin Fisher and great-granddaughter of Rev. Thomas Dungan of Rhode Island, who established the first Baptist church in Pennsylvania at Cold Spring, Bucks County, in 1684. Likely established on General Baptist principles, the Cold Spring church dissolved in 1702, perhaps due to the influx of Calvinist Welsh Baptists. Many of Dungan's descendants remained connected to its successor, Pennepek Baptist in Lower Dublin. The Fishers were married at Pennepek in 1761, moving to Oxford Township after the Revolutionary War. To descendants of Dungan's defunct congregation, the notice of Boyle's "Free-Will Baptists" in Southwark may have signaled a resurgence of General Baptist beliefs in the region.⁴³

In the early nineteenth century, there were only a few organized places of worship in Oxford Township: Trinity Episcopal on the outskirts, the Friends meetinghouse at present-day Unity and Waln Streets, the German Reformed church on Main Street (Frankford Avenue), and its offshoot, a German Lutheran church, located nearby. Founded in 1770

⁴² Boyle, *Some Account*, 77; Boyle did not tell his congregation that he was preaching Swedenborgianism until after his account of the Free-Will Baptist Church in Frankford ends. Deed, Jesse Comly to David P. Simmons, Apr. 1, 1817, Deed Book MR 17, 111-2, Philadelphia City Archives; Death of Ellen Simmons, "consort of David P. Simmons," *Pennsylvania Inquirer & Morning Journal*, Feb. 16, 1833. The six-mile stone is now in Wissinoming Park; Simmons also may have had a home closer to town. An ad for Simmons's business, noting the recent patent, appears in *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, Nov. 18, 1809, 1; and the sale of the "yard on 11th s of Spruce," in *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, Sept. 25, 1813, 1. For details on Raguet, see James M. Willcox, *A History of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society, 1816–1916* (Philadelphia, 1916), 11–12.

⁴³ Boyle, *Some Account*, 77. Spencer, *Early Baptists of Philadelphia*, 18–47; Lindman, *Bodies of Belief*, 20–22; Alfred Rudolph Justice, comp., *Ancestry of Jeremy Clarke of Rhode Island and Dungan Genealogy* (Philadelphia, 1922), 152.

as a branch of the Germantown church, the German Reformed congregation was struggling by 1802—in part because the younger generation desired services in English—and began to rent space to other denominations. Benjamin Fisher served as a trustee during the transition and may have helped obtain the services of Baptist minister Burgess Allison of Bordentown, New Jersey, who began preaching often in 1805. Allison trained with Rev. Samuel Jones at Pennepek Baptist and was a noted educator and inventor. He collaborated with Frankford resident John Isaac Hawkins on several projects, including methods for making corn-husk paper and paper silhouettes. Hawkins was a Swedenborgian, leading some to speculate about Allison's theological views, which were likely more liberal than those of the Philadelphia Baptist Association. Allison “preached with great acceptance” at the German Reformed church in Frankford, leading to a secession of members, who, with members from Second Baptist in the Northern Liberties, founded the Frankford Baptist Church in 1807. At the same time, the German Reformed congregation requested ministerial support from the Philadelphia Presbytery, becoming Frankford Presbyterian Church in December 1807.⁴⁴

When Thomas Boyle arrived in Frankford in 1817, neither the Baptist nor Presbyterian churches had permanent leaders. The first regular minister of the Baptist church, Rev. David Jones, did not arrive until 1811, when the congregation was in the midst of “grievous difficulties.” He remained just two years. His farewell blessing may hint at exasperation over his inability to bring the congregation fully within the fold of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: “May the Lord grant to bless Frankford, and call many sinners to the knowledge of the truth.” The congregation had been unable to agree on legal incorporation, possibly reflecting the biblical concerns that split Mount Zion Christian Church in Southwark

⁴⁴ Hallowell, “History of Frankford,” 33, 41; Thomas Murphy, *One Hundred Years of the Presbyterian Church of Frankford* (Philadelphia, 1872), 54; Spencer, *Early Baptists of Philadelphia*, 169–70; “Burgess Allison,” in Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 6:121–24. Thomas Jefferson identifies Hawkins “of Frankford, near Philadelphia” in an 1806 letter cited in *Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies, from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Thomas Jefferson Randolph (Charlottesville, VA, 1829), 4:59. Hawkins's father was a New Church minister, and Hawkins became active in the New Church on his return to England about 1803; see Odhner, *Annals of the New Church*, 128, 241, 258, 260, 280. Richard DeCharms names Allison as one who “zealously” preached Swedenborg's doctrines to his “old church congregation” (*The Newchurchman—Extra . . . Containing a Report on the Trine* [Philadelphia, 1848], 140). DeCharms also notes William Boswell, ordained by Allison in 1809, was removed from Trenton Baptist in 1823 for preaching Swedenborgianism. Boswell then founded a “Reformed General Baptist” church in Trenton (John Hall, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton, N.J.* . . . [New York, 1859], 433).

the same year. Frankford Presbyterian Church had no resident minister between September 1816 and November 1818.⁴⁵

In the early summer of 1817, Boyle began preaching every two weeks, and by the end of August he had moved his family to Frankford. In addition to Mrs. Simmons and Mrs. Fisher, Boyle identifies others who offered him hospitality and supported his evangelism in the community, such as house carpenter and local constable Samuel Swope, farmer Robert Glenn, and Isaac Worrell, a descendant of Keithian Quakers. However, despite the area's fluid religious history—even the radical Abner Kneeland called Frankford “a pleasant village”—Boyle's memoir is replete with references to his perceptions of community hostility to the congregation. He recalled his first meeting in Frankford, when “Some would look in at the windows and doors, and then pass away laughing.” Later, he referred to threats “by the wicked, of being mobbed at the water side” during baptism, and verbal abuse by an unwelcome visitor to his home. Boyle did not identify the specific source of this hostility, which may have reflected disdain for his emotionalism, distrust of the doctrine he was preaching, local hooliganism, or his personal demons.⁴⁶ Methodist revivalism had met with some success in Germantown a generation before but was still struggling in Frankford as late as 1828, when Methodist diarist Hannah Bunting recorded this impression of the borough's religious life: “My heart is sore within me while I behold the total indifference manifested by most of the inhabitants of this village, with regard to the salvation of their deathless souls.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Spencer, *Early Baptists of Philadelphia*, 179–80; Spencer notes, “In 1808 an effort was made to obtain an Act of Incorporation, but for some unaccountable reason it was not obtained until 1824” (170).

⁴⁶ Boyle, *Some Account*, 79, 82–83; Jordan, *Colonial Families of Philadelphia*, 2:1093. Abner Kneeland uses “Frankfort, or Frankford, a pleasant village in Philadelphia county, Pennsylvania” to illustrate “proper names of two syllables, the accent on the first” in *The American Definition Spelling Book* (Concord, NH, 1814), 161.

⁴⁷ John F. Watson, in *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in the Olden Time . . .* (Philadelphia, 1857), 2:26, states, “The Methodists began to preach in Germantown in about the year 1798.” Stephen L. Longenecker, in *Piety and Tolerance: Pennsylvania German Religion, 1700–1850* (Metuchen, NJ, 1994), notes the importance of “Emotional religion” to German Pietists, stating that “Relations between the German revivalists and English-speaking Methodists were always close” (88, 134). *Memoir, Diary and Letters of Miss Hannah Syng Bunting, of Philadelphia*, comp. T. Merritt (New York, 1837), 1:136; Hannah's sister and brother-in-law led Methodist meetings in Frankford. A church was founded in 1830; see Hallowell, “History of Frankford,” 4. James J. Farley, in *Making Arms in the Machine Age: Philadelphia's Frankford Arsenal, 1816–1870* (University Park, PA, 1994), 119, states that in the mid-nineteenth century “most inhabitants of Frankford remained unchurched, or at least their names do not appear on existing church lists”; however, the only church list cited is “List of Members (no date), Frankford Presbyterian church.”

Antipathy to Boyle in the community may also reflect the annoyance of existing churches to the competition he represented. As Janet Lindman has noted in describing Baptist controversies in the colonial period, "The policy of religious toleration . . . did not prohibit interference from competitors." Daniel Walker Howe has argued that the "new" aspect of Charles Finney's evangelism in the 1820s was his nonsectarian message, which often caused those in mainstream denominations to see him "as an interloper and a threat." Boyle's account of his ministry in Frankford was openly critical of sectarianism and "proselyting [*sic*] to party spirit." Frankford's Presbyterian and Baptist churches, without strong leaders of their own at the time, may have viewed him similarly.⁴⁸ Bell has documented the divisive impact of Finney's revivalism on Philadelphia's German Reformed churches, exacerbated by the growing acceptance of English, the language of revivalism. Boyle's evangelism may have fueled similar friction in Frankford.⁴⁹

The congregation gradually expanded after Boyle's move to Frankford. On January 1, 1818, Boyle and the church trustees signed a contract to rent a half acre of property at Hedge and Guinea (now Plum) Streets, where they created a burial ground and built a meetinghouse that was ready for worship by early August 1818. The new meetinghouse was in the heart of what was Frankford's African American enclave, perhaps confirming the sect's positive reception by the African American community in Southwark. Members of Frankford's African Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church, formed nearby in 1817, may have seen in Boyle's meetings some of the enthusiastic evangelism of their own worship. Although none of the few persons known to be members of Frankford's Free-Will Baptist congregation at this early period have been identified as African American, it is likely that there would have been reciprocal interest between Boyle's flock and the A.M.E. church. Frankford's African American population would not have its own Baptist church for another fifty years, but the A.M.E. church was open to the preaching of Baptists, having invited English Baptist John Lawson to preach for them on his visit to Frankford in 1811. Lawson recalled, "They invited me to preach to them, which I did

⁴⁸ Lindman, *Bodies of Belief*, 19; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York, 2007), 172–73; Boyle, *Some Account*, 74.

⁴⁹ Bell, in *Crusade in the City*, 46, notes that "with the introduction of English into German Reformed services in Philadelphia in 1819, the revival influence entered the church for the first time." This language transition had already occurred in Frankford's German Reformed congregation, as discussed above.

often with great pleasure," though they were "extremely irregular in their behaviour at worship."⁵⁰

Boyle began to preach in the outskirts of Oxford Township, as well as in the meetinghouse in Frankford. Peter Fesmire, whose family had farmed in Oxford Township near Trinity Church since the mid-eighteenth century, invited Boyle to preach at his home, through the introduction of his brother-in-law, Thomas Rorer. Both Rorer and Fesmire were married to daughters of Henry Castor, a member of Frankford Presbyterian. Joseph Hallowell, a descendant of an old Chester County Quaker family, invited Boyle to preach at the octagonal, one-room Washington School near his farm, "Lawndale." Hallowell had purchased twenty acres on the Kensington and Oxford Turnpike near Trinity Church in 1813 and was likely involved in establishing the school by private subscription in 1814. When the school trustees closed the building to their use, Boyle lamented, in characteristic fashion, "the door was shut against us—Lord when will persecution cease!" The Hallowells then offered their home for "preaching, and also for band"; Boyle would recall the "many glorious joyful seasons we have had in this dwelling."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Boyle, *Some Account*, 82–84; Hallowell's footnote (83) notes that the property "was on the Southeast side of Hedge Street and Northeast side of Plum Street." Richard C. Allen, in "The Colored Population of Frankford," *Papers Read before the Historical Society of Frankford* 1 (1906): 8–9, states that Plum Street was once "Bowser's lane," home of Letitia Bowser, "a faithful and efficient member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Frankford." Bowser Street was previously known as Guinea Street, perhaps referring to the African origin of the residents. The 1818 contract to rent the property on Hedge Street is recorded in William Singleton & wife to Thomas Boyle & others, Jan. 1, 1818, Deed Book MR 18, 250–53, Philadelphia City Archives; the location on Hedge and Guinea Streets is noted on page 251. Bowser Street is identified as "formerly called Guinea Street" in New Jerusalem Society of Frankford to Revd. James Seddon, Trustee, Mortgage Book TH 8, 26–27, Philadelphia City Archives. The church building is shown at Hedge and Bowser on the map "Frankford, area of Black residence," in Henry Williams and Robert Ulle, "Frankford, Philadelphia: A 19th Century Urban Black Community," *Pennsylvania Heritage* 4, no. 1 (1977): 6. The authors note, "Between 1800 and 1880, the community was . . . bounded by Foulkrod Street to the north, Oxford (now Kinsey) to the west, Tackawanna Street to the south, and by Paul Street to the East," and that Second Bethel (now Campbell A.M.E.) was founded "in 1817 in Sarah Congo's home on Bowser Lane" and "was the only all-black church in the area until 1869," when Second African Baptist Church was founded (5, 7). For Lawson's visit, see, "John Lawson," in *Oriental Christian Biography, Containing Biographical Sketches of Distinguished Christians Who Have Lived and Died in the East*, comp. W. H. Carey (Calcutta, 1850), 2:417.

⁵¹ Boyle, *Some Account*, 84–85; George Martin Castor, comp., *The Castor Family of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1910), 72–73; Deed, Estate of Benjamin Cottman to Joseph Hallowell, Apr. 13, 1813, Deed Book IC 30, 352, Philadelphia City Archives. Lawndale was at present-day Rising Sun Avenue and Martin's Mill Road; from Boyle, *Some Account*, 84; Mary Paul Hallowell Hough, *The Hallowell-*

During the growth of the Frankford church in early 1818, the church in Southwark, now the First United Free-Will Baptist Church of Philadelphia, remained under the leadership of Stevens and Elliott, who were also evangelizing in Delaware. About this time, an unnamed “Free-will Baptist preacher” visited Philadelphia cloth merchant William Schlatter, who was publishing translations of Swedenborg’s writings and selling them at David Thuun’s book store on South Sixth Street, in addition to providing them free in bolts of cloth. Schlatter had inherited his missionary zeal from his grandfather, Swiss Pietist Michael Schlatter, “an enthusiastic denominational organizer” sent to establish German Reformed churches in colonial America. Members of Frankford’s German Reformed church would have known the family, particularly the strong Swiss component among the founders, which included the Castors. The young preacher, likely Boyle or Stevens, called on Schlatter to request Swedenborg’s writings because he understood that New Church members “held ideas similar to his own, on the divinity of the Lord, and he wished to investigate them.” Schlatter discussed New Jerusalem doctrines with him and gave him “a good stock” of books, including Robert Hindmarsh’s *A Seal upon the Lips of Unitarians, Trinitarians, and All Others Who Refuse to Acknowledge the Sole, Supreme, and Exclusive Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, published in Philadelphia in 1815. Over several months, the preacher returned for more books, as “his people were reading them,” but then he disappeared.⁵²

Schlatter would not hear from the Free-Will Baptists again for some time, but the books he provided them informed the creation of their doc-

Paul Family History (Philadelphia, 1924). For Washington School, see Franklin D. Edmunds, comp., *A Chronological List of the Public School Buildings of the City of Philadelphia, Pa.* (Philadelphia, 1934), 11.

⁵² William Johnston, *A Discourse on the Divine Trinity: In Which Is Proved That Jesus Christ Is the Supreme and Only God of Heaven and Earth* (Wilmington, DE, 1819); A letter recounting Boyle’s visit is quoted in the “Twenty-Second Report of the Manchester Printing Society,” *Intellectual Repository for the New Church*, n.s., 1 (1825): 240–44. The letter, likely written in late 1822 or early 1823, notes that the preacher visited “[a]bout five years ago” (243). Schlatter was ambiguous about the preacher’s visit; he may have met Boyle while he was still in Philadelphia in 1817. Although Schlatter is not identified in the report as the author of the letter, he was in correspondence with members of the Manchester Printing Society regarding the progress of the New Church in America throughout this period. The letter also notes the author’s republication of two of Swedenborg’s works (241), which corresponds with Schlatter’s known publication history; see Odhner, *Annals of the New Church*, 248, 253. The evangelism of the New Jerusalem Church in Philadelphia became one of several disputes with New England New Church leadership; see Block, *New Church in the New World*, 76, 105; quote on Michael Schlatter from Longenecker, *Piety and Tolerance*, 72. Murphy, in *One Hundred Years of the Presbyterian Church in Frankford* notes that “Its founders were, most of them, Swiss, from Basle” (50).

trinal framework, designed "to be as liberal as the gospel is free." Elliott and Stevens chose Philadelphia publisher Dennis Heartt to print *The Discipline of the United Freewill Baptist Church Together with Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the Use of Its Members* in early 1819. Heartt briefly published the *Philadelphia Magazine, and Weekly Repertory* in late 1818 and, more notably, African American educator Prince Saunders's *A Memoir Presented to the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and Improving the Condition of the African Race, December 11th, 1818*. Although earlier hymn choices allude to an antislavery stance, the 1819 *Discipline* makes the position of the Free-Will Baptists clear, particularly at a time when the Methodist Church was becoming increasingly ambiguous on the issue to retain momentum in the West and South. Article 16 states, "No member shall buy, sell, or hold a slave."⁵³ The *Discipline* does not provide a specific scriptural citation or doctrinal source for this prohibition. The descendants of Keithian Quakers and German Pietists in Frankford likely already favored abolition, although some may have recalled the Baptist controversy of 1791, when wealthy Virginia planter Robert Carter, formerly a prominent Baptist, freed 442 slaves based on his understanding of Swedenborg's writings. Rev. Samuel Jones, pastor of Pennepek Baptist and a leader in the Philadelphia Baptist Association at the time, was directly involved in trying to quash Carter's "heresy."⁵⁴ However, while individual members of the New Jerusalem Church were beginning to speak out in

⁵³ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 12. At the 1804 Methodist Conference, "its utterances on [slavery] were measured. . . . While emancipation was still recommended to the owners of slaves, a failure to emancipate did not work forfeiture of membership in the Church"; from Lewis Curts, ed., *The General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from 1792 to 1896* (Cincinnati, OH, 1900), 67–68. See also Donald B. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780–1845* (Princeton, NJ, 1965), esp. 22–53; and Dee E. Andrews, "From Natural Rights to National Sins: Philadelphia's Churches Face Antislavery," in *Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia: Emancipation and the Long Struggle for Racial Justice in the City of Brotherly Love*, ed. Richard Newman and James Mueller (Baton Rouge, LA, 2011), 174–97.

⁵⁴ Hywel M. Davies, in *Transatlantic Brethren: Rev. Samuel Jones (1735–1814) and His Friends: Baptists in Wales, Pennsylvania, and Beyond* (Bethlehem, PA, 1995), 247, notes Rev. Samuel Jones's communications with Robert Carter of Virginia. Christopher Allen Rogers, in "A Dissident's Revolution: Religious Antinomians in American Culture, 1740–1830" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2006), 216, cites a 1791 letter from Philadelphia Baptist minister William Rogers to his colleague Rev. Isaac Backus in New England regarding Carter's embracing Swedenborg's "wild notions." See also Andrew Levy, *The First Emancipator: The Forgotten Story of Robert Carter, the Founding Father Who Freed His Slaves* (New York, 2005). Lindman, in *Bodies of Belief*, 168–72, discusses the collaboration of Jones and Carter in establishing a Baptist community in Virginia, prior to Carter's acceptance of Swedenborg.

opposition to slavery, “abolition was not a primary or unified cause among the earliest American Swedenborgians.”⁵⁵

The thirty-eight articles of the *Discipline* describe the society’s organization, theology, and form of worship, an amalgam of beliefs and practices that were familiar or sensible to the compilers. As Nathan Hatch has observed, “As preachers from the periphery of American culture came to reconstruct Christianity, they mingled diverse, even contradictory sources, erasing distinctions that the polite culture of the eighteenth century had struggled to keep separate.” The members were to hold weekly meetings where “there shall be full liberty given to the members to speak, sing, or pray.” The Lord’s Supper would be given monthly, “in the evening after preaching,” as midday was “unscriptural.” Quarterly district meetings would include a “love feast,” conducted in the Wesleyan tradition: a meeting of about two hours, consisting of song and prayer, bread and water only, and an opportunity for “each individual to speak of the dealings of God to them.” Both men and women had “the liberty of freeing their minds to the public, before or after preaching,” and “the sisters” were free “to have their prayer meetings by themselves, if they think proper.” Baptism by immersion was a key tenet, but new members were not “constrained to it, should their consciences lead them to think it not an immediate duty.” Baptism did not afford greater privileges; for example, in the election of deacons, “All members, both male and female, baptized and unbaptized, shall have full power to vote for or against them.” Preachers and officers had to be baptized by immersion. Preachers were to receive “a decent support from the church,” but officers were not paid. Officers included elders and deacons, familiar to Baptists and Methodists, but also “ruling elders,” more usually a Presbyterian role.⁵⁶

Children were not baptized, but the society adopted the primitive practice of “devoting” children, or what John Leland observed was “satirically called *dry-christening*.” As stated in the *Discipline*, “Infants shall not be sprinkled among us, but may be brought forward publicly to the elder, who shall lay his hands on them and call their names out in public.” Reflecting

⁵⁵ Katherine J. Speas, “What Would Swedenborg Do? Theology in Context during the Time of Slavery,” *Studia Swedenborgiana* 14 (2004): 21–38, quote 24; Block, *New Church in the New World*, 330–32.

⁵⁶ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 17–21, 38; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 35; Richard O. Johnson, “The Development of the Love Feast in Early American Methodism,” *Methodist History* 19 (1981): 67–83.

Quaker and Mennonite tradition, the society prohibited "Swearing of every kind, in courts or elsewhere"; required that "all the members live in the habit of plainness, in their dress, in the habit of cleanness in their walk, talk and conversation"; and forbade lawsuits among members: "All differences and disputes that may fall out among us, shall be settled by impartial judges, free of any expenses whatever. Brother must not go to law with brother." The poor among the society were to have "particular care" and "immediate relief to their necessities." The society "reverenced and kept holy" the "Sabbath day, commonly called Sunday," by attending worship and avoiding "servile work," including cooking; and eschewed "All vain and unprofitable exercises or amusement, such as balls, plays, shows, cards, dice; all manner of gaming, drinking liquor to an excess, singing carnal songs, reading unchaste, unprofitable books; all backbiting, speaking evil one of another, lying, envying one another." However, the society's Sabbath-keeping and moral imperatives were not meant to be part of the growing political evangelism for moral reform. The *Discipline* prohibited political involvement, while tersely commenting on the state of local government: "The members shall not busy themselves with politics, or in bribing people to vote at elections." "Disorderly persons" could plead their case in quarterly and yearly meetings: "No member shall be cut off from among us until all proper means shall have been tried for his or her recovery," but, should reconciliation fail, the offender would be "disowned in the love feast."⁵⁷

An unusual aspect of the *Doctrine* is the way in which the compilers incorporated Swedenborgian theology, although without attribution. Following the articles is a section entitled "Opinion of the Trinity," for which the authors provide this preface: "As there has been much said concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, preached by John Elliott and Samuel Stevens, we have thought proper here to make mention of our belief of Christ; not, however, considering it as a creed, or a confession of faith, nor is any one constrained to believe this doctrine in order to become a member of this church." From that point on, the text is taken from

⁵⁷ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 18–21, 33; Armitage, *History of the Baptists*, 757; *The Writings of the Late Elder John Leland*, ed. L. F. Greene (New York, 1845), 120; Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ, 2009), esp. 53–60. Sparks, in *Roots of Appalachian Christianity*, 45, calls "devoting of children" an "old Puritan infant baptismal rite." The *Discipline* reflects the blending of Keithian Quaker, German Pietist, and Baptist principles that began in the seventeenth century; see Lindman, *Bodies of Belief*, 15–19.

the New Church writings that William Schlatter had provided them. Of the forty-nine sections of Robert Hindmarsh's *A Compendium of the Chief Doctrines of the True Christian Religion as Revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, which Schlatter published in Philadelphia in 1817, the Free-Will Baptists included six: those explaining Swedenborg's concept of the "Divine Trinity," as embodied in the "One Person" of Jesus Christ, "similar to the human trinity of mind, body, and proceeding operation in every individual man"; and of the atonement, which rejected the traditional view of a vicarious sacrifice to satisfy divine justice. The *Discipline* authors did not include the section on baptism, which states: "it is immaterial whether the ceremony be performed [by] immersion" or by "sprinkling or affusion." Following the *Compendium* sections is the verbatim "Conclusion" to Hindmarsh's *A Seal upon the Lips*. The hymns chosen for the *Discipline*, a completely different selection from the 1813 hymnal, also reflect a shift toward a Swedenborgian perspective.⁵⁸

Despite the "depression of external circumstances" during the Panic of 1819, the spiritual prospects of the Free-Will Baptist community seemed promising. Stevens and Elliott established a society of Free-Will Baptists in Burlington, New Jersey, by March. In early April, the Free-Will Baptist congregation in Wilmington, Delaware, held the first meeting at its own place of worship, a former Quaker schoolroom on King Street. In June, Wilmington shoe merchant William Johnston published a sermon he had delivered at the meetinghouse, entitled *Discourse on the Divine Trinity; in Which Is Proved That Jesus Christ Is the Supreme and Only God of Heaven and Earth*. To counter accusations that Johnston's views were "so erroneous, that no Society of Christians" would "fellowship" with him, Thomas Boyle, "elder," and the deacons and trustees of the Free-Will Baptist Church of Frankford included an affidavit vouching that he was a member in good standing of their "connexion." Johnston concluded his publication with a "beautiful extract" from Hindmarsh's *A Seal upon the Lips*. In June, both Stevens and Johnston were preaching in the Wilmington area, not only in the Free-Will Baptist meetinghouse in the city, but also to textile

⁵⁸ Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 39–74, quotes 57 and 60; Robert Hindmarsh, *A Compendium of the Chief Doctrines of the True Christian Religion as Revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg* (Philadelphia, 1817), 34, 36, 87; Robert Hindmarsh, *A Seal upon the Lips of Unitarians, Trinitarians, and All Others Who Refuse to Acknowledge the Sole, Supreme, and Exclusive Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia, 1815), 335–43. The New Church view of the atonement was akin to "Christians," Freewill Baptists, and Universalists; see Kenny, *Perfect Law of Liberty*, 92–93.

workers and their families at "the Free Meeting House near the Madison Factory" on Red Clay Creek and "the school room near Mr. Duplanties [*sic*]" on the Brandywine. However, John Elliott's situation in New York was deteriorating rapidly. From April through August 1819, his property on Duane Street was among those advertised for public auction due to unpaid taxes. New York's chancery court processed the sale in late August. By 1820, Elliott appears to have moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as an "independent preacher," and William Johnston began organizing a "Union Meeting" of the "Christian and Free Will Baptist Connections" in Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Wilmington. The Southwark church likely had dissolved by 1823.⁵⁹

With the decline of the New York and Wilmington societies, Frankford became the center of the Free-Will Baptist connection. Boyle claims to have preached to "six or seven hundred people" in the woods near the Hallowell farm on July 4, 1819. The society established a weekly prayer meeting for children aged nine to sixteen, "and numbers from the neighbourhood assembled with them." Boyle also began preaching in Milestown on the Old York Road in Bristol Township, likely in the town's new octagon school. The last home of Universalist George de Benneville, Milestown had routinely invited ministers of various theological views to

⁵⁹ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Third General Convention of the Receivers of the Doctrines of the New-Jerusalem Church, From Different Parts of the United States . . .* (1820), 34, in *Reprint of the Early Journals of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem*, part 1, *Journals One to Eight, 1817–1826* (Boston, 1888); Elliott and Stevens, *Discipline*, 261–63; Boyle, *Some Account*, 85–86; *Wilmington (DE) American Watchman*, July 23, 1817, 4, and Mar. 31, 1819, 4; William Johnston, *A Discourse on the Divine Trinity . . .* (Wilmington, DE, 1819), 1–10; *American Watchman*, June 12, 1819, 3. The Madison Factory was a woolen mill; "Mr. Duplanties" was the cotton mill of Duplanty, McCall, & Co. Elliott and Stevens had "business of importance" in New York (*American Watchman*, Mar. 31, 1819, 4). Ads for property sale, in *New York Columbian* and *New-York Evening Post*, Apr.–Aug. 1819; Chancery ad, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, Aug. 18, 1819, 4; "Union Meeting," *Wilmington Delaware Gazette and State Journal*, May 3, 1820, 1. Forney, in *History of the Churches of God*, 30, notes a John Elliott was minister of an "independent church, of Baptist tendencies" in Lancaster about 1816, affiliating with John Winebrenner's Church of God about 1827. I. Daniel Rupp, *History of Lancaster County* (Lancaster, PA, 1844), 463, puts him there about 1820. Elliott was "disfellowshipped" [*sic*] by the Church of God in 1831 for "holding the doctrine of Universalism," became a Methodist Protestant minister in 1833, and died as minister of Pittsburgh's First Methodist Protestant Church in 1839; see Forney, *History of the Churches of God*, 315, and death notice, *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, Aug. 6, 1838, 2. In 1826, Stevens published *The Latest Collection of Original and Select Hymns, Designed as a Companion for All Denominations*. He identifies himself and Elliott as "Elders and Preachers of the United Freewill Baptist Society in the city of Philadelphia," but that society is not listed in Wilson's 1823 *Picture of Philadelphia*. Southwark members may have joined the Second New Jerusalem Society, founded in 1823 by Manning B. Roche, formerly minister of Trinity Episcopal Church, Southwark; see Odhner, *Annals of the New Church*, 296.

preach at their schoolhouse. Yet, Boyle felt unwelcome there as well: "I lament that other denominations are not as friendly with us as I could wish, but stand aloof." He wondered, "Lord, when will party spirit subside, and the watchmen see eye to eye!"⁶⁰

Elliott's difficulties in New York may have spurred the Frankford congregation to pursue incorporation "for prudential reasons." Joseph Hallowell traveled to Harrisburg to retrieve the incorporation papers for "The Free Will Baptist Church of Pennsylvania," approved and filed on December 22, 1819. According to Boyle's account, he made a dramatic return to the church "on Christmas night . . . to the great joy of all that were present." Including Boyle, eighteen men had signed the constitution submitted with the request for incorporation, nearly all in their twenties and thirties and descendants of early Quaker and German Pietist families whose histories in the region were closely interwoven. As of 1820, their occupations were evenly divided between agriculture and "manufactures." With the possible exception of Joseph Hallowell, they likely would all have been of moderate means. The preamble to the constitution encapsulated their ambitious goal to "be the means of the Salvation of thousands."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Boyle, *Some Account*, 85–87; Eddy, *Universalism in America*, 27–28; Anne de Benneville Mears, *The Old York Road, and Its Early Associations of History and Biography: 1670–1870* (Philadelphia, 1890), 52–53.

⁶¹ The charter for "The Free Will Baptist Church of Pennsylvania" is recorded in RG-26 Corporation Bureau, Charter Book, 1819–1825 (vol. 3), 144–53, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. The names on the 1819 constitution have been checked against 1820 US census returns and biographical information that exists for those whose descendants remained in the church over several generations. Although the family names would have been respected for their longevity in the area, there is no evidence that the congregation was wealthy or had a wealthy benefactor. While David P. Simmons was a prosperous businessman, no evidence has been discovered of his direct connection to the Frankford congregation; the David P. Simmons Receipt Book, 1813–1858 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania) includes no payments to the Frankford church or recognizable members of it. Although many members of the New Jerusalem Church of Frankford would become part of the neighborhood's middle class over time, the congregation was always of modest means and remained connected to the community, within a few blocks of its original location, for its entire history. Farley, in *Making Arms in the Machine Age*, 4, argues that "the people of Frankford valued property and its acquisition" during this early period, but his evidence is anecdotal. The young men of the Free-Will Baptist congregation undoubtedly hoped to build a good life for their families, but their involvement in this upstart congregation also demonstrates religious and community values. The thirty-six articles of the constitution were printed in the "Discipline" section of Boyle's *Some Account*, along with a few additional membership admonishments, reflecting governance and worship practices similar to those identified in Elliott and Stevens's 1819 *Discipline*. The issue of slaveholding is not specifically mentioned, which likely reflects a change in the focus of abolitionists in Pennsylvania by 1820, when the federal census enumerated only about two hundred slaves in the entire state, rather than a shift in

Boyle's account of the "Rise and Progress" of the Frankford Free-Will Baptists ends with their incorporation. His introduction to its publication is dated January 12, 1820, and signed "Your very unworthy Pastor." Although a common evangelical concept, Boyle's keen sense of "unworthiness" may reflect his unease at presenting the twelve "heavenly doctrines of the Free Will Baptist Church" without noting that they were virtually identical to the "Chief Articles of Faith of the New Church" as published in the *New Jerusalem Church Repository* in January 1817. By early 1821, Boyle publicly acknowledged that "his sermons were principally quotations" from Swedenborg's writings. Some "dissented and resigned their membership," but others assisted in the transformation.⁶² Boyle also reconnected with William Schlatter, who reported to printer Johnson Taylor on "better news at Frankfort [*sic*]" in February 1821:

Nearly all [Boyle's] congregations are firm believers in the Doctrines and he has a Considerable number of hearers in and near Germantown who are fast coming into the Doctrines. I have not heard of such an instance of suessfull [*sic*] preaching. . . . and it may reasonably be inferred from what E S says on the subject that when the Clergy receive the Doctrines and preach them to thier [*sic*] congregations for a time, they may avow them openly and they will be cordially received. . . . [S]uch zeal as he is possessed with does not fall to the lot of many, he is in very moderate circumstances indeed save what his small school provides him, but Mrs. Simmons . . . informs me he is perfectly happy and contented, appearing only to live in the promoting [of] the cause of Truth [and] Christian love.⁶³

perspective among church members. In Boyle's critique of sectarianism, he laments that "professing Christians do not unite in the one common cause of religion," entreating them to "love the image of Jesus wherever we see it, if even in the sable sons of Africa" (*Some Account*, 73–74). Edward Raymond Turner discusses the progress of abolition in the state in *Slavery in Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, 1911), noting that by 1820, "in Philadelphia and the older counties it had almost entirely disappeared" (86).

⁶² Boyle, *Some Account*, 75; "Doctrine," 7–15; "Chief Articles of Faith of the New Church," *New Jerusalem Church Repository for the Years 1817 & 1818* (1817–18): 7–10; "New Jerusalem Society of Frankford" (anonymous history), ca. 1949, 2, copy of typescript provided to the author by the Swedenborg School of Religion, Newton, MA, Aug. 11, 1986.

⁶³ William Schlatter to Johnson Taylor, Feb. 14, 1821, William Schlatter Letter Book, 1814–25, William Schlatter Archives, Swedenborgian Library and Archives at Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, CA. Boyle was paid "for the tuition of poor children" under the 1818 "free school" law; Eleanor E. Wright, "Frankford's First Schools and School-masters," *Papers Read before the Historical Society of Frankford* 1 (1906): 52. Ellen Simmons's reference to Boyle's "very moderate circumstances" seems to confirm that she and her husband, David, were not providing substantial financial assistance to the church.

In a letter to Rev. Lewis Beers of Danby, New York, in April 1821, Schlatter reiterates Boyle's success in preaching "New Church" doctrines within an "Old Church" framework:

His church coming in the manner they have done is one of the most extraordinary circumstances that has occurred in the spreading of the new church, and it only serves to convince us that when Clergymen who are beloved by their flocks and have their eternal happiness at heart, receive the new doctrines, they will have great power over their minds, and lead thousands in the right way by the true light.⁶⁴

Schlatter knew that the young Baptist preacher exemplified the non-Separatist concept of the New Jerusalem Church. The non-Separatists, led by Anglican minister John Clowes, and Separatists, led by former Methodist Robert Hindmarsh, were identified in England as early as 1787, when Hindmarsh followers in London first proposed creating a separate denomination. Clowes and other Swedenborg receivers near Manchester were against this move, insisting that "the distinguishing characteristic of a New Churchman" was "the life of love and charity." In their view, requiring Swedenborg receivers to "quit every other society of Christian worshippers" had "the semblance of bigotry and intolerance."⁶⁵

Unlike the London receivers, the societies under Clowes's leadership were groups of "simple-hearted poor" in the rapidly industrializing communities around Manchester. One of the earliest societies, six miles north of the city at Whitefield, developed among the younger members of a "body of very poor people"—mainly farmers and handloom weavers—who were readers of the mystics Jacob Boehme and William Law. Clowes had found solace in these mystic writers himself, but understood the need of a new generation to be useful to their struggling communities. In Clowes's words, the mystics "never told him what to do with his hands and feet." The group began with *Heaven and Hell*, which has been called "Swedenborg's most readable book." It provided a new perspective on the relationship between faith and charity: "Moral and Civil Life is *the action* of Spiritual

⁶⁴ William Schlatter to Lewis Beers, Apr. 12, 1821, William Schlatter Letter Book.

⁶⁵ See Block, *New Church in the New World*, 61–72, for an overview of the schism. Quotes from Clowes's correspondence on the subject of the "new sect" in *Life and Correspondence of the Reverend John Clowes*, ed. Theodore Compton (London, 1874), 49.

Life; for Spiritual Life consists in *willing well*, and Moral and Civil Life in *acting well*." The Whitefield society, in the shadow of a new cotton mill, established a Sunday school and a short-lived shop and "manufactory" to support the church and its members. Such enterprises illustrate the appeal of Swedenborg over Wesley in these communities. In the words of Lancashire historian Malcolm Hardman, "To pass from Methodism to Swedenborgianism, in the early nineteenth century, is to pass from questions of individual sensibility to dilemmas of corporate responsibility."⁶⁶

Boyle likely was unaware of the New Jerusalem controversy in England, but at least one family in Frankford could describe it firsthand. In 1821, Frankford Presbyterian Church hired recent immigrant James Seddon to lead their Harmonic Society, founded by Jesse Castor in 1818. With the transition to English worship, younger members wanted to learn the "rousing songs" of contemporary revivalists. Born into a musical family, Seddon taught singing "by note" in the old English "Sol Fa" tradition. James, his widowed father Thomas, and younger siblings John and Mary, descendents of an old Lancashire family with a tradition of religious dissent, also imported the nonsectarian view of the New Jerusalem. Thomas, "a simple-hearted workingman," had led the New Jerusalem society in Ringley, an adjacent township to Whitefield. He helped bring John Clowes to preach in Manchester's northern suburbs, having first approached him "through his anxiety to obtain a clear and satisfactory view of the Divine Trinity." A visitor to the Ringley society in 1820 marveled, "This Society, consisting solely of persons confined to the humble walks of life, discussed with clearness the important doctrine concerning the Divine Trinity. What has hitherto been deemed incomprehensible by the learned, was shewn by them, from very many parts of Sacred Scripture, to be within the comprehension of the meanest capacity."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Compton, in *Life and Correspondence of the Reverend John Clowes*, notes the "jealousy of the neighbouring clergy" when "the simple-hearted poor began to flock in crowds" to hear Clowes's informal lectures on the doctrines of Swedenborg (26). An account of the origin of the Whitefield society, including references to its school and shop, is given in *Aurora; or, The Dawn of Genuine Truth* 1, no. 9 (Jan. 1800): 317–20, quote 319. Clowes's quote on the mystics from *Life and Correspondence of the Reverend John Clowes*, 16. William White, *Emanuel Swedenborg: His Life and Writings*, 2nd ed., rev. (London, 1868), quote on *Heaven and Hell*, 227, quoting *Heaven and Hell*, 271; John F. Wilson, *History of Whitefield* (Whitefield, UK, 1979), 14 (reference to cotton mill); Malcolm Hardman, *Classic Soil: Community, Aspiration, and Debate in the Bolton Region of Lancashire, 1819–1845* (Madison, NJ, 2003), 86–101, quote 92.

⁶⁷ Murphy, *One Hundred Years of the Presbyterian Church in Frankford*, 73–79, 119–20; David S. Rorer, "The Main Street of Frankford during the 'Thirties,'" *Papers Read before the Historical Society*

The Seddons, like many of their neighbors, were victims of the dire effects of more than forty years of rapid industrialization and nearly two decades of war. Several of Frankford's early textile operations were founded by emigrants from the Manchester area in the early nineteenth century. By 1819, representatives of districts in England's industrial North declared that high unemployment, skyrocketing prices, and widespread death and disease were so "deep and general" that they were "too great for human endurance." Men and women from Whitefield were among tens of thousands who set out "full of hope and expectation" on August 16, 1819, to hear political reformer Henry Hunt at St. Peter's Field in Manchester, only to return "discomfited and maltreated" with news of the "Peterloo Massacre," the unprovoked government cavalry attack on their peaceful assembly. Considering the political unrest, poverty, and pollution transforming their once-pastoral community, the Seddons may have seen Frankford as a place to apply "New Jerusalem" principles to the industrialization process before it was too late. Schooled in the "Science of Correspondences," they may have found inspiration in the "spiritual sense" of "the church in Philadelphia": "those who are in truths originating in good from the Lord" (Rev. 3:7).⁶⁸

of Frankford 2 (1909): 26; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 153; Odhner, *Annals of the New Church*, 247; Woodville Woodman, *Singing at Sight Made Easy . . . The Lancashire (or English) System . . .* (London, 1860). Woodman was pastor of the Ringley New Jerusalem Society at this time, and later wrote "Fragments of the Early Social History of the New Church in the North. II.—Ringley," *Intellectual Repository* 18 (1871): 161. Anne Cooke and E. N. Kershaw, *History of the New Jerusalem Church, Kearsley, 1808–1908* (Farnworth, UK, 1908), 51–60, 3; Robert Hindmarsh, *Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church, in England, America, and Other Parts* (London, 1861), 338. The visit to the Ringley society occurred September 17, 1820; Thomas, Mary, and John Seddon arrived in New York, July 8, 1820. According to his October 1825 Declaration of Intent, James arrived in Philadelphia at age twenty-seven in 1819; see Philadelphia District Court Naturalization Records, vol. 2, 14, Philadelphia City Archives.

⁶⁸ William B. Dixon, "Frankford's Early Industrial Development," *Papers Read before the Historical Society of Frankford 2* (1912): 50–59; George Castor Martin, "Samuel Martin, Proprietor of the First Textile Mill in Frankford," *Papers Read before the Historical Society of Frankford 2* (1916): 243–44; Mary McConaghy, "The Whitaker Mill, 1813–1843: A Case Study of Workers, Technology and Community in Early Industrial Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History* 51 (1984): 30–53; "Meeting on Hunslet Moor," *Observer* (Manchester, UK), June 20, 1819. Robert Poole calls Peterloo "the bloodiest political event of the nineteenth century on English soil," in "The March to Peterloo: Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England," *Past and Present* 192 (2006): 112. *Recollections of Whitefield and Its Neighbourhood, from 1800 to 1826* (Manchester, UK, [1897]), 11; *A Dictionary of Correspondences . . . Extracted from the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, 6th ed. (Boston, 1872), 274. The New Church view of "correspondence" is the "internal sense" of the natural world, "the relation which natural things bear to spiritual things," unlike the literary ideas of "fable" or "metaphor"; see discussion and examples in Edward Madeley, *The Science of Correspondence Elucidated*, rev. B. F. Barrett, 6th ed. (Germantown, PA, 1883), 71–84, quote 728.

The Seddons likely heard of Boyle's unique congregation through Schlatter's correspondence with John Clowes and the Manchester Printing Society, founded by Clowes in 1782 to make Swedenborg's works more accessible. For the non-Separatists, Boyle's example was heartening. By the spring of 1822, he was preaching in eight different locations within a twenty-mile radius of Philadelphia, in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Based on Boyle's reports, Schlatter estimated he was preaching "to about 1000 persons at the different meetinghouses to which he [had] free access." Thomas Seddon assisted with the local societies and served as a New Church missionary in western Pennsylvania. An 1822 Frankford ordinance helped promote religious toleration in the borough, prohibiting "disturbing any congregation, society or meeting, assembled for the purpose of religious worship, by blowing horns or trumpets, shooting or firing guns, or by any other means with intent to disturb or interrupt the worship or devotion."⁶⁹

At the fifth convention of the New Jerusalem Church, held in Philadelphia, June 3–4, 1822, Boyle requested that his congregation "be received into fellowship" with the New Jerusalem Church, provided they might "still retain their form of Baptism by immersion and their name of Freewill Baptists of the New Jerusalem Church." The request was unanimously adopted. A special version of *Hymns for the Use of the New Church, Signified by the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse*, published in Philadelphia in 1822, was issued the same year under the title *The Free-will Baptist Hymn Book: Compiled for the Lord's New Church*. The hymnals are identical, except for the collection of fourteen traditional baptismal hymns appended to the latter. To the non-Separatists, the desire of the Frankford Free-Will Baptists to retain their old name and mode of baptism was insignificant. As the report to Rev. Clowes and the Manchester Printing Society emphasized, "These people are now performing a great use; they are an intermediate link in the great chain, between the New and Old Church." Their example provided inspiration that the future would "see whole congregations of New Church men, worshipping the Lord Jesus under the form in which they had been educated and accustomed, and let

⁶⁹ William Schlatter to Holland Weeks, June 15, 1822 (quote), and William Schlatter to John Clowes, June 17, 1822, William Schlatter Letter Book; Cooke and Kershaw, *History of the New Jerusalem Church*, Kearsley, 57–58; DeCharms, *Newchurchman*, 630–31; *A Digest of the Ordinances of the Borough of Frankford* (Philadelphia, 1836), 51. No records documenting the background of borough ordinances this early are extant; from phone conversation with Philadelphia City Archives staff, Apr. 28, 2014.

that be Methodist, Quaker, Presbyterian, or Baptist, it will make no difference in the sight of our Lord, for he looks at the heart and not at the form.” However, like the Free-Will Baptists, who comfortably blended diverse religious ideas, the nonsectarian “Manchester liberals” and their American offspring are generally assumed to have “gone nowhere.” An early New Church minister used the Ringley society to illustrate the futility of the non-Separatist view: “Had the good old friends continued in their quiet way on Ringley Brow, they would simply have died out, and made no sign, and left no mark.”⁷⁰

Thomas Boyle’s spiritual zeal was his physical undoing. He died in his mid-thirties in May 1823, exhausted by “the glorious cause he had undertaken.” The Seddons and Isaac Worrell, ordained as a New Jerusalem Church minister in December 1823, continued the ecumenical course that defined the congregation over the course of its 150-year history.⁷¹ The 1825 charter for the “New Jerusalem Church in Frankford” may have pushed its Free-Will Baptist heritage into the background, but the congregation did not lose sight of it. Its sense of both church and community history distinguishes it from other reform congregations of the Second Great Awakening. Like other reform groups, the Free-Will

⁷⁰ *Proceedings of the Fifth General Convention of the Receivers of the Doctrines of the New Jerusalem* . . . (1822), in *Reprint of the Early Journals of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem*, 56–58, quote 57; William Schlatter to John Clowes, June 17, 1822 (quote). The report on the Free-Will Baptists, including notice of publication of their hymnal, appears in the “Twenty-Second Report of the Manchester Printing Society,” *Intellectual Repository for the New Church*, n.s., 1 (1825): 243. One of these hymnals is in the collections of the American Antiquarian Society. Block, in *New Church in the New World*, 71, contrasts the “non-sectarianism and catholicity” of the “Manchester liberals” with Hindmarsh’s position. Kirven, in “Emanuel Swedenborg and the Revolt against Deism,” 322, sees the choice as “sectarianism or oblivion”; and Jane Williams-Hogan, in “A New Church in a Disenchanted World: A Study of the Formation and Development of the General Conference of the New Church in Great Britain” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1985), 676, contends that in “social and organizational terms,” the position of Clowes and his followers “went nowhere.” New Church minister Jonathan Bayley discusses the early Ringley church in *New Church Worthies, or, Early but Little-Known Disciples of the Lord in Diffusing the Truths of the New Church* (London, 1884), 155.

⁷¹ “Obituary,” *Intellectual Repository for the New Church*, n.s., 1 (1825): 81–85. A memorial poem was written by Caroline M. Thayer and published with the title, “Tribute to the memory of The Rev. Mr. Boyle,” in *New-Jerusalem Missionary, and Intellectual Repository* 1, no. 2 (1823): 69–71. In 1821, Thayer had described the religious and gender discrimination of New York Methodists when she embraced Swedenborg’s doctrines, in *Letter to the Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the City of New-York: Stating the Reasons of the Writer for Withdrawing from That Church and the Circumstances of Her Subsequent Dismission from the Wesleyan Seminary* (New York, 1821); she ultimately returned to the Methodists. A small clipping from an unidentified Philadelphia newspaper, attached to the cover of the transcript of Boyle’s *Some Account*, shows that the New Jerusalem Church of Frankford was formally dissolved in May 1971.

Baptists interpreted scripture in a new way, but, unlike many, they did not "revolt against history" or dismiss the Old Testament. Instead, their young founders, heirs of dissenting traditions that embraced religious toleration and easily blended "science and superstition, naturalism and supernaturalism, medicine and quackery," applied Swedenborg's "modern," scientific guide to the "internal sense" of the Bible and the natural world to create lives of charity and service in their rapidly transforming neighborhood.⁷²

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⁷² Hatch, "Christian Movement," 559; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 36. Hatch uses these apparent dichotomies as evidence of the fluidity of thought exemplified by evangelists such as Lorenzo Dow; however, these were also traits of early English and German dissent. For religious tolerance and folk practice among Pennsylvania Germans, see Longenecker, *Piety and Tolerance*; and Richard E. Wentz, "The American Character and the American Revolution: A Pennsylvania German Sampler," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44 (1976): 115–31. Many of the English immigrants that joined the Frankford church came from Lancashire, long identified as an area of religious diversity, where science and superstition intersected; see Hardman, *Classic Soil*; Robert Halley, *Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, UK, 1872); David Paxman, "Lancashire Spiritual Culture and the Question of Magic," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 30 (2001): 223–43; and John Percy, "Scientists in Humble Life: The Artisan Naturalists of South Lancashire," *Manchester Region History Review* 5 (1991): 3–10.