"Pedlars in Divinity": Street Religion in Massachusetts and Rhode Island before 1830

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In 1742 at the height of New England's first revival, a Massachusetts farmer took out a notice in the *Boston Weekly News-Letter* that has drawn the attention of several scholars studying the region's early black history as well as the Great Awakening religious movement.[1] In it Gershom Flagg of Woburn offered a reward of two pounds for the capture and return of his indentured manservant. "Ran-away, on Saturday Night," the notice read,

> a Negro Man Servant, Indented for 7 Years, named Pompey York, about 35 Years of Age, speaks good English, of middle Stature; He had with him, two old cotton & linnen Shirts much patched, a grey Broad Cloth great Coat faced with Yellow... He had also a Spoon and Dial Mould, and other Tinkers Tools.

The farmer then added almost as an afterthought:

> The said Negro can read and write well, and is very deceitful, pretending to be a new Convert, and is very forward to mimick some of the Strangers that have of late been preaching about among us.

A few months later Pompey York was apprehended and returned to Woburn. But within a year he ran away from Flagg again. This time he was wearing a gray homespun coat and a blue jacket, both with metal buttons, and walked "stooping." Flagg offered eight pounds' reward, an amount probably reflecting the increased time of his indenture. The notice again mentioned York's ability as a tinker and stated that he "sometimes undertakes to Exhort, and sometimes to tell Fortunes."

York ran away a third time from a new master, Amos Peaslee, in 1748. Peaslee was a farmer in nearby Haverhill who had purchased York's indenture from Major Gilman of Exeter, who in turn had purchased him from Flagg. Peaslee alluded to York's ability to "read, write, and cypher" and offered a reward of five pounds but made no mention of his religious activities.[2]

Two things may have made it hard for these men to hold on to York. First, York had a good understanding of the laws of Massachusetts. A former slave, he had received his manumission from a previous owner in nearby Billerica. Although he was obligated to give time to new

1. William D. Piersen, *Black Yankees* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 71; Edwin S. Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England* (Gloucester, Mass.: Smith, 1965), p. 128.

2. *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 15 April 1742, 25 March 1743; *Boston Gazette*, 8 November 1748.

masters, he was not owned by them, and he could buy his freedom. Second, he could rely on two trades while on the road. As an itinerant tinker, he carried molds to make new spoons and buttons from broken old pewter plates and manufacture bases for outdoor sundials. And as an itinerant exhorter and fortune-teller, he could draw on a bicultural background that had wide appeal. Like many "cunning" people who were practicing or pretending to practice medicine and fortune-telling, York had access to both medieval English fortune-telling lore, as well as African or Anglo-African divination practices.[3]

Although we have no record of York's preaching texts, these announcements provide us with one of the best insights to date into the phenomenon of street religion in early New England. Exhorters like York have always been common in England and early America. Diarist Samuel Pepys describes a man walking through the main hall of Parliament in 1667 crying, "Repent! Repent!"[4] In New England many such exhorters were representatives of organized dissenting sects such as Baptists and Quakers. They typically attacked "hireling ministers" and left a trail of encounters between them and the dominant Congregationalists that (in Massachusetts) began with the hanging of Mary Dyer in Boston in 1660 after her banishment, and the whipping of Lydia Perkins who appeared naked in a Newbury meetinghouse in 1663.

This paper examines the lives of York and other street exhorters active in Massachusetts and Rhode Island from the time of the Great Awakening to the early national period. It enquires how frequently New Englanders encountered exhorters during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries and whether they were part of a larger New England-wide spiritual malaise or simply another ingredient in the region's religious prolixity. The cases are arranged chronologically, but each one helps identify exhorters by distinct types: (1) educated preachers associated with the mid-century revival; (2) "disenfranchised" elements of society (like Pompey York) who imitated or mimicked them; (3) "crazy" religious types who drifted about composing and singing verses; and (4) those who made religious exhorting an adjunct to their living as broadside peddlers, hawkers of religious tracts, and self-styled authors. Most were literally "street people," meaning they were indigents, evangels,[5] vagrants, or runaways who lived in barns,

3. Piersen, *Black Yankees*, ch. 7; Peter Benes, "Fortune-tellers, Wise-Men, and Magical Healers," *Wonders of the Invisible World: 1600–1900: 1992 Annual Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife* (Boston: Boston University Scholarly Publications, 1995): 127–28.

4. Samuel Pepys, *Diary and Correspondence of Samuel Pepys, F.R.S.*, 4 vols. (New York: Davos Press, n.d.): 3:204 (July 1667).

5. Little is known of street religions in the first decades of the eighteenth century. In his diary of 1726, Harvard student Jacob Eliot noted that "An Evangel" was active in Boston in 1726. Jacob Eliot, *Diary of the Rev. Jacob Eliot, M.A., 1716–1764*, ed. William I. Morse (Cambridge, Mass., 1944).

horse stables, and outdoor camps. But a few were trained clergymen or experienced tradesmen and chapmen who pursued a livelihood, or a partial livelihood, on the streets.

As we know, Pompey York's "mimick[ing]" of preaching strangers was part of the Great Awakening, the popular revival movement that began in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1737, and spread to virtually every parish in New England during the next seven years. After the "great itinerant" George Whitefield *(Figure 1)* broke down the gallery of a large Boston meetinghouse (from the weight of his auditors) and later gave an open-air lecture to an estimated four thousand people on Boston Common, the revival attracted scores of clergymen and students of divinity who left their pastorates or their studies to embark on similar lengthy pilgrimages to awaken what they identified as "sleeping" congregations and their ministers. One of the most extreme was James Davenport (1716–1755), who abandoned his pastorate in Southold, Long Island, to embark on a wild twenty-four-month odyssey with two assistants that culminated in a public book-burning episode in New London, Connecticut, and a public recantation. In Boston, Davenport stood on a joiner's stool and sang psalms to draw attention and then accused the Boston ministry of being unconverted. He aroused considerable local resentment, inspiring one writer to publish a "Sonnet, dedicated to the *Street Musicians*" (meaning the psalm and hymn singers who typically accompanied exhorters), satirizing Davenport's hunger for payment of any kind — "Cash, . . . old shoes, dirty Hose, . . . and even rusty Nails." *(See Appendix 1.)* Diarist Nathan Bowen reported on 4 August 1742 that he attended a meeting in Charlestown where Davenport "held forth under an apple tree." Bowen continued:

> He is now gone eastward and preached this week at Ipswich in the Meeting House, which I believe is the first into which he has been admitted since he came to Boston & I wish it may be the last.

Three weeks later Bowen wrote that Davenport was indicted in Boston for "Disorderly Behaviour & refused bail & went to Jail."[6]

The Great Awakening also attracted large numbers of converts from uneducated portions of New England society. Like Pompey York many were former slaves and slave runaways; some were inexperienced students, housewives, unattached women, and even children. They told their listeners they had experienced public distress (often accompanied by outcries and sobbing) and found relief in a Christian conversion.[7] In

6. Nathan Bowen, almanac diary, Marblehead, Mass., transcribed in William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts*, 4 vols., 1905–1914 (reprint; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962), 12 November 1809 (3:477).

7. "Diary of Eleazer Wheelock, D.D., During his Visit to Boston," *Historical Magazine* 2d ser. 5 (1869).

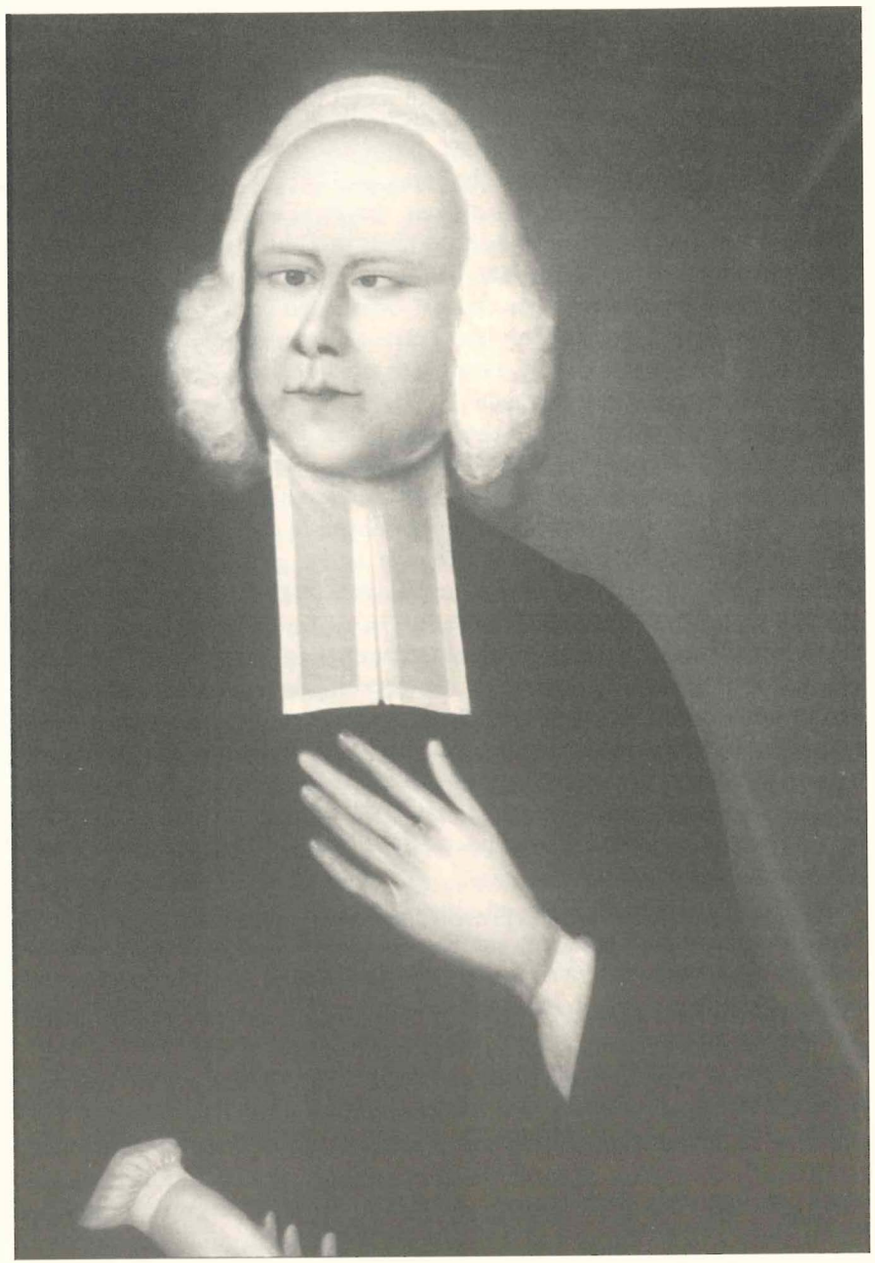


Figure 1. REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD (1714–1770). Attributed to Joseph Badger (1708–1765), Charlestown, Massachusetts, circa 1743–1765. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Harvard University Portrait Collection, Gift of Mrs. H. P. (Sarah H.) Oliver to Harvard College, 1852.

the words of one commentator, exhorters suddenly "sprung up under [us]... like Mushrooms in [the]... Night." In time most people expressed

their dislike for them. Charles Chauncey, a clergyman opposed to the revival, judged that the majority were "raw, illiterate, weak and conceited young Men, or Lads... [who] take upon them what they imagine is the Business of preaching."[8] Nathan Bowen reported that in Marblehead exhorters were so common that "carters, coblers, & the meanest labourers leave their honest employments & turn Teachers." He added, almost incredulously, that even a "woman's meeting is on foot."[9] A correspondent to the *Boston Weekly News-Letter* suggested a solution: "[Since there is] a very wholesome Law of the Province to discourage Pedlars in Trade," he said, "[it is now] Time to enact something for the Discouragement of Pedlars in Divinity."[10]

Who were these "Pedlars in Divinity"? A few may have been simply disaffected or sullen youths. Elisha Paine, for example, was jailed in Worcester in 1743 for "Publishing or Uttering Mock Sermons in Imitation or in Mimicking preaching and other parts of Divine Worship." Others were housewives tired of their lives as an underclass—like Bathsheba Kinglsey, the "brawling" housewife in the Connecticut Valley, who after receiving "immediate revelations from heaven" in 1741 stole her husband's horse and began to ride from town to town preaching the gospel.[11]

But many others were alienated classes of people, especially blacks, mulattoes, and Native Americans, who joined with women and took it upon themselves "to exhort their Betters even in pulpit before large assemblies."[12] Contemporary diaries and newspapers are filled with examples. Pallas Worrison, a runaway, was described in a Boston advertisement in 1740 as "a pretty handsome Indian Man... about 17 years of age [who] speaks good English, gets in[to] drink and then affects to be a scholar, and to talk Religion, and to preach."[13] "Webster's Caeser," a black slave in Lebanon, Connecticut, mentioned in the 1742 diary of Rev. Jacob Eliot, spent a day exhorting at "Smiths" (a Lebanon tavern) and then attempted that night "to lie with an Indian woman telling her... that Hell was not so dreadful a place as had been described." Still others were servants in New England households. Flora Negro (b. 1723), a slave of Thomas Choate of Ipswich, Massachusetts, is said to have

8. Quoted by C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 30, 31.

9. Nathan Bowen, almanac diary, Marblehead, Mass., transcribed in Bentley, *Diary*, 12 November 1809 (3:475).

10. Cited by Gaustad, *The Great Awakening*, pp. 71–72.

11. Cited in Ross W. Beales Jr., "The Ecstasy of Sarah Prentice: Death, Re-Birth, and the Great Awakening in Grafton, Massachusetts," MS in possesion of the author (1991), n. 35. Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 23.

12. Frank Lambert, "'I Saw the Book Talk': Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening," *Journal of Negro History* 77, no. 4 (1992): 185–98.

13. *Boston Post-Boy*, 23 June 1740.

served as an itinerant minister among her fellow slaves and was one of four slaves who joined the newly formed separate church in that town in 1746.[14] In central Connecticut, religious excitement was so strong that Jacob Eliot reported that in March and April 1742 "young men and Indians" regularly went about from parish to parish interrupting the service. Rev. Jacob Eliot waited an entire month before he could write in his diary that there were "No Exhorters at meeting."[15]

In the decades after the revival, incidents such as these continued but on a smaller scale. John Potter, an Indian cited by Reverend James MacSparran in South Kingston, Rhode Island, was identified as "an Exhorter among the New Lights" in 1751, ten years after the outbreak. (MacSparran reported Potter was "found dead among the Husks of old Esqr. Helmes widow, whose Corn it seems was husked last Night, and its tho't the Fellow overdrank himself.")[16]

Nevertheless, there is evidence that a few exhorters had emerged from New England's propertied middle class. The diary of Westborough clergyman Rev. Ebenezer Parkman indicates he routinely took in destitute or ill men, women, and children passing through his central Massachusetts parish. He typically gave these transients a meal and a place on the floor in front of the fire; usually they would be gone the following morning. Parkman took in such a person who arrived on horseback on Monday evening, 3 January 1774. According to Parkman's diary, Ichabod Jones (as he called himself) was an "old and miserable man... a poor distempered, rheumatic, Object" laid low by an exhausting mid-winter ride from Dorchester to Westborough, a distance of forty miles.

It turned out, however, that Jones was very different from most other beggars who sought Parkman's hospitality. The following day Parkman learned to his great surprise that Jones not only went "about as a Vagrant," but "Sings, makes Verses and is sometime Crazy." Worse yet, Jones had attracted so much attention with his religious cant at an estate vendue, he received an invitation to preach the following evening at a private home. Parkman immediately called on his parishioner and advised him of "the sin and folly" of inviting an unknown exhorter to preach and he forbid it; he also summoned his deacon to learn why he had endorsed the idea.

But it was too late. What followed during the next ten days tested to the limit not only Parkman's patience but the loyalty and discipline of

14. Erik R. Seeman, "'Justice Must Take Place': Three African Americans Speak of Religion in Eighteenth-Century New England," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 2d ser., 46, no. 2 (1999): 303–414.

15. Jacob Eliot, "Diary," *Historical Magazine* (1869), 28 March 1742 to 5 June 1742 (pp. 33–34). Eliot, "Diary," 28 March through 23 April 1742 (p. 51).

16. James MacSparran, *A Letter Book and abstract of out services: written during the years 1743–1751* (Boston: Merrymount Press, 1899), p. 58.

his most trusted parishioners. On Wednesday, 5 January 1774, despite inclement wintry weather and despite Parkman's explicit request that the gathering not take place, Ichabod Jones preached to a large crowd. The gathering was thrilled by his presentation, and soon Jones began living at the deacon's home. The following Saturday, 8 January, he preached at another house in Westborough, and on Sunday, 9 January, at still another. At this point Parkman reversed his strategy and tried his best to ignore this intrusion into his parish. To those who would listen, he pointed out that the proceedings were "irregular," that it was very disorderly for Jones, a "preaching stranger," to thrust himself into the neighborhood without consulting him. But Jones, in fact, had tapped into the same religious convictions that maintained Parkman's own status in the community, and Parkman was obliged to wait and hope that Jones's audiences would become tired of his verses before Parkman's own support entirely gave way.[17]

Fortunately, Parkman did not have to wait long. To his great relief Jones took up his "bundle" and left on foot for Providence ten days after arriving in Westborough—leaving behind his horse. Jones was not again seen in the parish. After Parkman made enquiries, Rev. John Cushing in the neighboring town of Ashburnham reported that "Crazy Isaac Jones" had precipitated similar encounters in his parish.[18] Parkman may have also heard from Rev. John Ballantine of Westfield, Massachusetts, who in December 1770, three years previously—almost to the day—had offered Ichabod Jones lodging at his parsonage only to face his barrage of verses and exhorting. Ballantine noted in his diary that Jones "Rides about the country, lives on the charity of the people, says he is sick but travels in all weather." Ballantine also noted that although there was an "appearance" of religion, Jones had a "considerable estate" that he neglected.[19]

It is a terrible loss to New England folklore that we lack a musical script of Ichabod Jones's songs and verses. (Were the melodies taken from English country tunes or variants of familiar psalmody tunes such as "York" or "Windsor"? Were they wild, or did they sound quietly passionate, like "Amazing Grace"?) Fortunately, we do know a little more

17. Parkman, Diary, 3–13 January and 8, 25 March 1774 (Ross Beales Jr. typescript). Parkman sometimes called him "Isaac Jones." 3 January 1774: "At Eve came an old, miserable man *Ichabod Jones*, he says, of Dorchester. He lyes by the Fire. A poor distempered, rheumatic, [ ] Object. I keep his Horse also." 4 January 1774: "... at the Vendue of Miss *Mary Bradish's* House yesterday at *Deacon Woods*, there was one Mr. Jones, who goes about as a Vagrant, Sings, makes Verses and is sometimes Crazy."

18. Frederick L. Weis, *The Colonial Clergy of Colonial Churches of New England* (Lancaster, Mass.: Descendants of the Colonial Clergy, 1936), p. 66.

19. John Ballantine, "Journal," excerpted in John H. Lockwood, *Westfield and Its Historic Influences*, 2 vols. (Springfield, Mass.: privately printed, 1922), 1:424. "20 [December 1770] One Ichabod Jones lodged here—he is said to have a considerable estate but makes no use of it. Rides about the country, lives on the charity of the people, says he is sick but travels in all weather, in all ways, there is an appearance of religion."

about religious exhorters who used other forms of communication—the print media—to proselytize their views or to write autobiographies. The larger world of printed broadsides, chapmen, and flying stationers occupies a special place in New England history. Because single-sheet imprints and chapbooks were inexpensive, they provided an outlet for a variety of street culture such as the dissemination of ballads, short histories, current events, and popular entertainments. (For example, Edward Burlesson, a broadside writer born in seventeenth-century Suffield, Connecticut, became New England's first puppet entertainer.)

Broadsides and pamphlets were also used to proselytize religious points of view. According to an 1818 newspaper report in Providence, Jonathan Parks, a short and noticeably overweight street peddler known for his "remarkably loud" voice and his debilitated left leg, used to position himself on the west end of Great Bridge that marked the terminal point of deep-sea vessels entering the river. Displaying a personal intensity by which he attracted passersby to purchase his tracts, he spoke against drunkenness, profane swearing, and Sabbath breaking—all couched in the language of religious zeal.[20] In spite of his appearance and mannerisms, however, he quickly won sympathy and a number of Providence citizens willingly gave him notes on credit to further his causes.

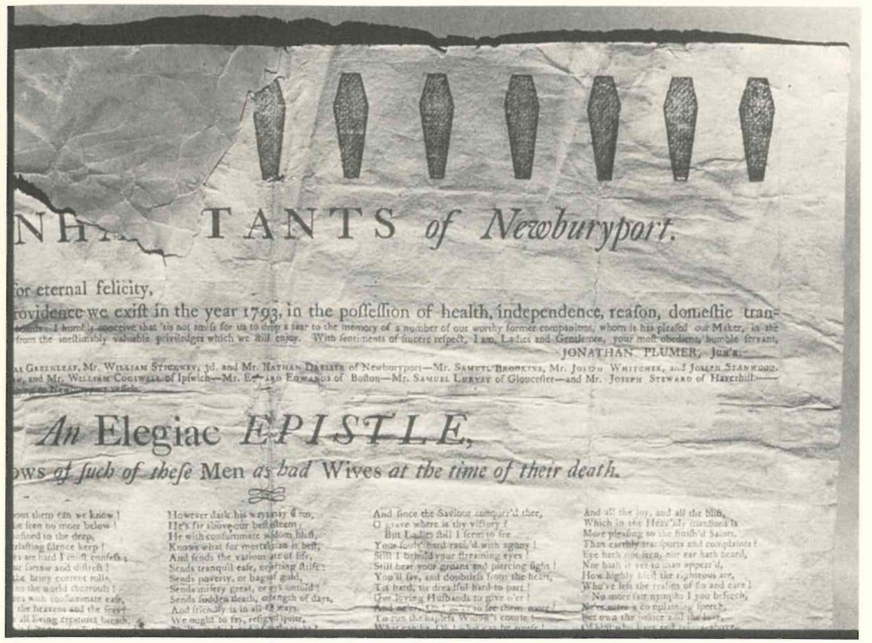
And at least one exhorter named Henry Tufts (1748–1831) published a lavish autobiography which in part reflects his efforts to earn his keep as a traveling fortune-teller and to wander from parish to parish winning free room and board in exchange for preaching.[21] Tufts began this lifestyle after deserting from the Continental Army. While walking through Vermont on his way home, he began telling fortunes using a lobster claw as a talisman, persuading occupants of the houses where he stopped that he was a celebrated conjuror with power to predict the future. This earned him what he described as "fees amounting to eight shillings in an evening."

Tufts's autobiography was self-serving and may have been unreliable because his lawyer wrote it for him. Much more can be learned about street preaching from Jonathan Plummer of Newburyport, Massachusetts—a self-styled street preacher—who published and distributed about three-dozen broadsides (some with atrociously designed woodcuts), all reminding readers of their own mortality.[22] His topics included earthquakes, executions, massacres, suicides, murders, fires, and outbreaks of smallpox. His mastheads gave witness to these events with a row of coffins *(Figure 2)*, be it for drowned families,

20. *Providence Gazette*, 21 March 1818.

21. Henry Tufts, *The Autobiography of a Criminal*, ed. Edmund Pearson (New York: Duffield and Company, 1930), pp. 220–21.

22. "Writings of Jonathan Plummer," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 43 (October 1933): 248–53.


TANTS *of Newburyport.*

or eternal felicity,

ovidence we exift in the year 1793, in the poffeffion of health, independence, reafon, domeftic tran-

JONATHAN PLUMER, Jun'r.

An Elegiac *EPISTLE,*

ows of fuch of thefe Men *as had* Wives *at the time of their death.*

Figure 2. Detail. Jonathan Plummer, "An Elegiac Epistle, to the Widows of such of these Men as had Wives at the time of their death." Broadside commemorating a shipwreck. Newburyport, Massachusetts, 1793. Collection of the Historical Society of Old Newbury.

drowned seamen, or their surviving widows. His titles announced impending doom—such as "Plummer's alarm to the unconverted"—while also offering consolation and a means for redemption. Plummer trained for the ministry in his youth but soon left his studies to become something of a local celebrity in Newburyport where he sold broadsides out of a basket and often read his own and others' verses in Market Square. Plummer fit easily into the lives of successful but eccentric Newburyporters. The wealthy merchant Timothy Dexter patronized him as his "Poet Laureate," and dressed him in a suit of red, illustrated in a now-lost portrait originally engraved by James Akin *(Figure 3)*.[23] Dexter soon invited him permanently into his home.

On the other hand, Rev. William Bentley of nearby Salem had little patience with Plummer and saw him as a man who profited from others' misfortunes. He found in Plummer's broadside account of the 1795 execution in Ipswich, Massachusetts, "a tendency to make Dying Speeches ridiculous".[24] Bentley particularly disliked (and

23. *Newburyport Herald*, 10 February 1809.

24. Jonathan Plummer, "Dying confessions of Pomp: a negro man, who was executed at Ipswich, on the 6th August 1795, for murdering Capt. Charles Furbush, of Andover, taken from the mouth of the prisoner, and penned by Jonathan Plummer." Broadside. Newburyport, 1795.

Figure 3. "Jonathan Plummer, Poet Laureate to Lord Dexter." Artist unknown, probably after James Akin's engraving of 1809; Boston, 1858. From Samuel Alonzo Knap, *Life of Lord Dexter.*

privately scorned) Plummer's religious posturing and kept a tab on his misadventures in Newbury, Salem, and Boston. He noted that Plummer

was insulted by a mob when preaching on Boston Common; Plummer apparently tried the same thing many times in Newburyport, but the town finally stepped in to refuse him the "liberty of field preaching." In August 1808 Plummer joined a group of renegade or freewill Baptists (Bentley called them "Free Willers of the Christian Tabernacle") who dipped converts on Salem common—probably near the town pump. They sang, preached, and accosted passersby "by asking how it is with their souls." This group was back in Salem about a year later, dipping two women at Salem Neck. Plummer himself "ventured to preach night & morning on the Common near the [Salem] Workhouse." From his place of vantage in a neighboring house, Bentley reported that Plummer's audiences were mostly "women & children...[freely] coming & going."[25]

The "Pedlars in Divinity" discussed here were probably much more common in New England than is generally recognized. If a little-known exhorter like Ichabod Jones can be found in the diaries and correspondence of three central Massachusetts clergymen in the 1770s, who knows how many more verse-writers and singers preceded or followed him. Overall, the evidence suggests that even decades after the Great Awakening subsided, eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century residents in towns such as Boston, Providence, or Salem ran into street singers or street preachers on a weekly basis. In smaller towns like Westborough, Ashburnham, and Westfield, they might be confronted by such people on the average of once a month. We must remember that New England was a religiously sensitive region. Because

25. Bentley, Diary, 5 April 1793 (2:14); 6 July 1795 (2:156); 17 November 1796 (2:205); 18 November 1798 (2:289); 11 September 1808 (3:383); 15 July 1810 (3:531). See also Currier, *History of Newburyport,* 2:430–38; Perley, *Plumer Genealogy,* p. 77. Knapp, *Life of Lord Timothy Dexter.* Selections:

"An action at our last court ag. one Plummer for striking Mr. Moore, the minister, at Newbury, Old Town." Bentley, *Diary,* 18 November 1798 (2:289).

"William Patterson, Abraham Victor, Elias Smith, Jones & Co. are still in our part of the town. Another person was dipped last Thursday...Smith and Jones preach constantly & even sing in the streets & accost people by asking how it is with their souls." Bentley, *Diary,* 26 April 1807 (2:291).

"The Free Willers of the Christian Tabernacle in English Street, dipped two women at the Neck gate last week & this day, Plummer, who was insulted on Boston Common, ventured to preach night & morning on the Common near the Workhouse. I have not heard with what success." Bentley, *Diary,* 28 August 1808 (3:380).

"The poor man Plummer who lately exhibited on our Common on Sunday, was refused at Newburyport the liberty of field preaching. He was not exposed to the riotous insults of the populace as at Boston. We fear for the consequences of his return among us." Bentley, *Diary,* 11 September 1808 (3:383).

"More preaching on the Common by the free Willers, Jones, Plummer & Co. The collection I saw from a neighboring house. It was of women & children chiefly, coming & going. It is part of the profit from night lectures in Salem." Bentley, *Diary,* 15 July 1810 (3:531).

of a universal compulsion "to be saved," communities were always looking for exhorters, and when they came they were welcomed.

The evidence also tells us that exhorters shared a number of common characteristics, particularly those of alienation and confrontation. Street preaching was not a sanctioned occupation and generally operated on the edge of or outside the law. Like James Davenport, many were arrested, indicted, and jailed. Bathsheba Kinglsey had to face a judge who allowed her to continue her private counsels and exhortations but required that she desist in her itineraries. Jonathan Parks was wanted for swindling both in Maryland and Rhode Island. Henry Tufts was condemned to be hanged in Boston after he was discovered burglarizing a Salem home. Jonathan Plummer was taken to court for striking a Newbury minister.

In the nineteenth century, street preaching was institutionalized with the emergence of camp meetings and by the rise of denominations whose rules made proselytizing an act of every believer—among them Baptists, Universalists, Shakers, and Methodists. These newer men included the Baptist preacher Ephraim Stinchfield[26] and Lorenzo Dow, whose talent for organizing week-long assemblies worked to great effect. Dow advertised camp meetings in eastern Connecticut as early as 1805.[27] A week-long camp meeting in Falmouth, Massachusetts, was publicized in 1824 in a New Bedford paper, which informed readers that a vessel had been engaged to convey passengers to and from the meeting.[28]

As New Englanders moved westward into the Ohio River Valley, street preachers followed in their wake. Here they came under the shrewd eye of English traveler Frances Trollope touring the eastern United States in 1828 and 1829. She described one camp meeting where an itinerant Methodist preached "in a low nasal tone" to "above a hundred persons, nearly all females... [who were] uttering howlings and groans... [They] were soon all lying on the ground in an indescribable confusion of heads and legs." Later, while visiting Pennsylvania, she heard about another preacher who had contrived to obtain an intimate footing in many respectable families, especially those with daughters. One father who had noticed the "curious mixture of spiritual awe and earthly affection" that gleamed in the eye of his own daughter forbid this man to enter his house, and the preacher was never heard of again. "In due course of time," Trollope concluded, "no less than seven unfortunate

26. Ephraim Stinchfield, *Some Memoirs of the Life, Experience, and Travels of Elder Ephraim Stinchfield*, 1819; also see Stephen A. Marini, "Evangelical Itinerancy in Rural New England: New Gloucester, Maine, 1754–1807," *Itinerancy in New England and New York: 1984 Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife* (Boston: Boston University Scholarly Publications, 1986), pp. 49–64.

27. *Connecticut Gazette*, 22 May 1805.

28. *New Bedford Mercury*, 6 August 1824.

girls produced living proofs of the wisdom of my informants worthy father."[29]

Appendix 1. Satiric sonnet composed to mark Rev. James Davenport's arrival in Boston during the height of the Great Awakening religious revival in New England circa 1742. From a photostat at the New York State Library.[30]

A curious new Sonnet, dedicated to the Street Musicians
The Second Edition

Right Zealous? The following Lines were composed for your Sakes: They may possibly be of Service to you, since by their Means others who now differ from you in Sentiment, may be induced to Join Voices with you. They are wrote both in long and short Meter, for the sake of Disorder and Irregularity (by which I would avoid giving you the least Offence). The short Meter may serve you in the turning of two or three Corners, and when by Chance you enter a short Street, the long Meter will last to the End of it, and then you may [ ] on the short again, which may hold you to your Place of Rendezvous. Let your Chorister observe these Rules.

I Boston rejoice, lift up your Voice, For Da_____t is come;
He loves you all, both great and small, as Indians love strong Rum.

II This Babe of Grace his native Place, Is Southold on Long Island;
And when he goes to encounter Foes, 'Tis both by Sea and Land.

III The other Day he took his Way, And Hartford was his Route,
He play'd a Trick that made them sick, And so they spew'd him out.

IV With that he went, or else was sent, To Southold back again;
He was loth to stay, so run away, and got upon the Main.

V But now at last, with wondrous haste He's here arriv'd at Boston;
He brought (some say) two Arms away, but on the Road he lost one.

VI Or else the Chaise, in rocky Ways, Gave him a sudden pitch;
Threw him in Dirt, and one Arm hurt, but 'tant much Matter which.

VII But e're to Town his Way he found, At Charlestown wag'd his Tongue
But this same Town was not the Ground, that he was sent to dung.

VIII Then straight bethought what works he'd wrought, And in a mighty hurry,
Took Leg and came, all in a Flame to Boston 'cross the Ferry.

IX With him two Men of Might are come,
They're Armour bearers call'd by some
Whose Business is to carry on
The Work this pretty Man's begun;
To hold his Hat when he does preach,
Sometimes to exhort and sometimes teach;
For sure one Man is not enough
In noisy Mob to ding and huff
Besides it looks with better Grace
When happen does a Wild-Goose Chase,
Upon it more than one to see
Since one is not so good as three
For every Man of Sense will judge
That one is not enough to dodge;

29. Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, ed. Donald Smalley (New York: Vintage Books, 1949), pp. 76, 277.

30. Kate Van Winkle Keller kindly provided this document.

But three can run that Way and this,
And ten to one if they should miss.

X Behold him now with solemn Brow, on Joyner's Stool erect,
A Crowd before. Of rich and poor, Expecting to expect.

XI One Hand he waves, then set two Staves, From Hymn not David's Meter
For doubtless he takes him to be An unconverted Creature.

XII In Prayer then for Minutes ten, He'll rave and scold and storm,
And all he says, the Time he prays, Is void, without a Form.

XI With mind perplex'd he looks at a Text, And seems most dreadful glad,
And on he'll run, as sure as Gun, and talk like any mad [?].

XIV Now look around the holy Ground, Some gape, some cry, some laugh;
It looks like to the ancient Crew, that worshiped senseless Calf.

XV Saving that they of former Day, for Gold made theirs to pass,
But that in this a Mixture is, of Lead and eke of Brass.

XVI But when he gets into his Fits, Down Throats his Noise he'll cram,
Till standers by, being all o'high, by him are knock'd down slam.

XVII And when he's done, away he'll run, A singing thro' the Streets,
While others tell, how wondrous well, He has perform'd his Feats.

XVIII Oh Boston kind! Still hold of Mind, To lend him to your wide Common
No Place so fit for him to get, a little of your Mammon.

XIX Or if you grutch to think too much to part with ready Cash;
He'll take old Shoes, or dirty Hose, or any other Trash.

XX Nay he's aver'd upon his Word, If ready Rhine [?] fails,
He's so much bent on Shepherd's Tent, He'll take even rusty Nails.

XXI And in requite, he'll pay New Light or else in Bread and Fish,
For of that Stuff, he has enough, As much as Heart can wish.

XXII And if he should go on to build, This pretty Shepher'd Tent,
That you have given, Pound six or seven, You never would repent.

XXIII For he intends this Thing to lend to Priests whose Brains are addled
Then you shall see, for ne'er will be with Priestcraft longer saddled.

XXIV He's now in Store, Three Pounds and more, to carry on this Work;
And if you Mind to give's inclined, He build it with a Jerk.

XXV And surely when he's built this Pen, He can but love and thank ye;
For none could dream of a better Scheme, And so says Sancho Pancha.

XXVI But if your Heart is loath to part, with worldly things so dear
He'll scold and prate at such a Rate, Good People all stand clear.