

“Racial Crossovers in the Progressive Era: Amanda Berry Smith and Emma Ray”

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More than two decades ago in his article titled, “New Directions for the Study of Blacks in Methodism,” Lewis V. Baldwin proffered a list of desiderata that would prepare Methodist scholarship for the next centennial, including this one: “More time and energy could be devoted to studies of blacks who were affiliates with white Methodist churches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.”¹ Scholars have failed to heed Baldwin’s appeal to take up the study of race relations in Methodism during the Progressive Era. Some studies have attended to race relations in eras that precede or follow the Progressive Era. In *The Times Were Strange And Stirring*, Reginald F. Hildebrand explores the intersection of black and white Methodist denominations and their work in the South during Emancipation and Reconstruction.² Peter C. Murray analyzes race relations in his recent book, *Methodists and the Crucible of Race, 1930-1975*, from the antecedents of the Plan of Union through the demise of the Central Jurisdiction.³

This negligence of the Progressive Era is especially egregious in studies of black Methodism in America, which ignore race relations during these decades and move instead from Reconstruction directly to the Plan of Union. In *Dark Salvation*, Harry V. Richardson devotes a chapter to the expansion of black membership in four Methodist denominations, the AME, AMEZ, CME, and the MEC, in the South during Reconstruction. He glosses over the Progressive Era, apart from a few sentences, only to resume the discussion of race relations with the Plan of Union.⁴ William B. McClain repeats this pattern in his book, *Black People in the Methodist Church: Whither Thou Goest?*⁵ The best that scholarship has to offer is a solitary article by Ronald C. White Jr. which considers the import of four white Methodist leaders in the Progressive Era “who went against the cultural tides to focus their energies on racial reform.”⁶

There is also as yet no study of the tide in the other direction, from the African American church to the white. Historians of African American Methodism offer virtually no insight into this phenomenon because they showcase the Progressive Era as a time in which African Americans were committed exclusively to racial uplift among their own race. Consequently, recent publications on the AME church, for example, research its campaigns to bolster the African American community through women’s activities and organizations,⁷ ministers,⁸ and other AME church leaders,⁹ but there is nothing about race relations within Methodism.

Were we left to the parameters defined by scholarship on African American and white Methodism, both as independent entities and in relationship to one another, we would be led to believe that race relations simply did not exist during the Progressive Era. In other words, we would be compelled to concur with Rayford Logan’s infamous statement that the Progressive Era proved to be nothing more than the nadir of race relations.¹⁰ The purpose of this study is to enter a new element into the scholarship of American Methodism during the Progressive Era by incorporating the contributions of two African American women evangelists, Amanda Berry Smith and Emma Ray, both of whom crossed over the racial divide from African American to white Methodism and, in so doing, initiated interracial interactions during these years of increasing segregation in the United States. We will be compelled to admit, on the basis of this study, that scholarship on American Methodism has caricatured to some extent the history of race relations by underscoring either racial segregation or the notion of racial uplift during the Progressive Era.

The racial crossover of Amanda Berry Smith, a well-known figure in American Methodism, commenced in earnest with her experience of sanctification, occurring as it did in a white Methodist church. On a Sunday in August 1868, she walked nearly a mile, passing on the

way her own Bethel AME Church at 214 Sullivan Street in the “Little Africa” community of Greenwich Village, in order to hear The Rev. John Inskip’s preaching on sanctification at the all-white Green Street Methodist Episcopal Church. Amanda had pursued the experience of sanctification within her own community, first through a weekly, Monday afternoon prayer band gathering, complete with a regular footwashing ritual with three other African American women. She also initiated discussions with AME pastors sympathetic to sanctification. All of this was to no avail in garnering the experience she doggedly desired. Inskip’s reputation as a holiness leader was well-attested with his recent election as president of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness. Amanda was determined to hear his explanation of sanctification because she entered the all-white enclave, despite feeling the brand of her skin color, and sat in a back pew. Thanks to Inskip’s straightforward explanation, she received that which she had been seeking, and the electrified experience of sanctification prompted an audible shout from her lips, “Glory to Jesus.” Even though Inskip responded to her exclamation with a verbal affirmation of “Amen, Glory to God,” she feared disapproval from the white crowd, so she quit the church and retreated to her own community among the Fifteenth Ward of New York City.¹¹

Her call to preach transpired two years later in an AME service among her “own people.” On a communion Sunday in the fall of 1870, Amanda and one of her band sisters traveled to Brooklyn from Greenwich Village to attend the worship service in the Fleet Street AME Church. In the midst of the sermon, she had a vision of a star transformed into “the shape of a large white tulip,” over which there appeared the letters “GO” and a voice saying, “Go preach.”¹² These two religious experiences, one among white Methodists and one among African American Methodists, exemplified the racial crossover she would pursue for the next four decades in her evangelistic ministry as she looked to both communities for preaching opportunities and financial support.

Amanda’s racial crossover coalesced in particular acuity in three occasions in her life: holiness camp meetings, her industrial school for African American orphans, and her final home on the Sebring property. Holiness camp meeting grounds provided a place for African Americans and whites to co-exist with both occupying their assigned places.

Although blacks were allowed to take part in all sessions, camp meeting organizers often scheduled special worship services geared toward African-Americans but attended by both black and white. Blacks at mainly white camp meetings were also often put in a separate section in the front, near the speaker’s platform. White camp-goers enjoyed African-American music and the fervent worship style they observed in black religious gatherings. ... Camp meeting organizers often reserved the end-of-night service for African-Americans to hold their meetings and gave them the first part of the morning service ‘generally at the break of day’ so that their ‘often expressive and beautiful melodies’ would be the last thing heard at night and the first thing heard in the morning.¹³

Amanda interacted with both racial communities at camp meetings. As an African American, she was often slated to preach at the “colored people’s” meeting, a service geared specifically to the domestic servants and waiters who served the white attendees. She also circulated with white Methodists as her celebrity status increased and large interracial crowds congregated to hear her preach. On one occasion while she was preaching at the Ocean Grove camp meeting, a place where well-to-do Methodists gathered and built permanent housing, she related a racist incident where she was forcibly removed from her seat to the smoking car by the train conductor. She explained to her audience that she later prayed for the conductor, and her anger was stemmed and replaced with compassion. In a remarkably honest, public comment, she declared that sanctification had “saved [her] from the desire to be white.”¹⁴ By attaching this story to

sanctification, she was able simultaneously to condemn racism and proffer a way to supercede it. As Susie Stanley suggests, it was Amanda's "sanctified self" that enabled her "to speak out against racism when she faced it in her ministry."¹⁵

Integral to Amanda's racial crossover at camp meetings was her role as entertainer, noted by Pamela Klassen in her study of AME women. Klassen argues that whites gravitated easily to preachers and singers like Sojourner Truth and Amanda Berry Smith rather than "formidable intellectuals and activists" among AME women, like Hallie Q. Brown, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett, whose class and education made them more threatening to whites. "There is a distressing irony here: where Truth and Smith were embraced by white supporters and audiences both religious and political, the respectable women who based their authenticity and authority to speak on education, and perhaps class, were more uncomfortable presences for whites."¹⁶ Certainly Klassen's conclusion has considerable merit; however, she fails to consider that Amanda, unlike the other AME women named, sought the public platform as an evangelist to preach the gospel. To draw crowds as an entertainer meant that more people would hear her message, which was her fundamental objective.

The second scenario that brings Amanda's racial crossover into particular perspective was the founding and funding of The Amanda Smith Industrial Orphan Home. Her decision in the summer of 1894 to do something tangible for her own people emerged concurrently with a lecture tour in Great Britain. She spoke at the World Conference of the WCTU alongside two prominent AME "race women," Lucy Thurman and Hallie Q. Brown. AME historians, like Jualynne Dodson, describe "race women" as those who embodied their commitment to racial uplift in their dress, educational achievement, and labor on behalf of their race.¹⁷ Race women dressed "according to the politics of respectability," claims Klassen. "While not fully embracing fashion and costly display, these women dressed tastefully in their endeavour to establish themselves as virtuous, self-respecting women." Their educational achievement was superior, like Hallie Q. Brown, who was graduated with a bachelor of science degree from Wilberforce University. When the president of Wilberforce put out a plea for alumni to return to campus to "educate colored teachers," Hallie answered the call to teach and later became dean of the Women's Department.¹⁸

In her clothing and education, Amanda was not of this ilk. Her formal education was haphazard when she was younger, and by age thirteen, she had left home to work as a live-in domestic. Her clothing was plain and Quaker-like, a style that visually reassured audiences while she preached that she was a pious woman.¹⁹ Toward the latter half of her active ministry, however, she did attempt her own endeavor at racial uplift with the founding of the industrial home for African American orphans. She may have been influenced in this direction by her contact with Lucy Thurman, who, among other offices, would serve as president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACW) in 1906-08. The NACW's motto, "lifting as they climb," proclaimed the club's commitment towards an altruism among African Americans that included "charity and welfare, and a pragmatic goal of 'social betterment.'"²⁰ Lucy's sentiments about Amanda's orphan home reflected the resonances of racial uplift. "Her [Amanda's] great heart is stirred to its depths by the needs of her people and she believes that if the children are trained to be intelligent workers many of the phases of the Negro problem will be solved."²¹

On behalf of this endeavor for racial uplift, Amanda crossed over the color line of Methodism and back again for many years. From an AME church in Wilmington, Delaware to the First MEC in York, Pennsylvania, from a two-week revival at Metropolitan AME Church to a summer holiness camp meeting at Mountain Lake Park in Maryland, she traveled to speak and seeking funds for her school from white and black coffers. Long before construction began, her biographer notes that she spent "four years tapping her extensive, multiracial network of

evangelical Christians and temperance reformers, extending herself beyond the church and camp meeting circuit into women's clubs and other civic groups to launch this ambitious project."²² Once the school was underway, she convened an interracial advisory board, which deserves recognition as a laudable accomplishment at a time known as a "nadir in race relations." The board consisted of African Americans – AME clergy, laity, and a bishop, and whites – MEC clergy, laity, a bishop, and several philanthropists.²³ Providing additional, occasional support were several AME "race women," like Lucy Thurman, Hallie Q. Brown, and Ida Wells-Barnett, who organized the first black woman's club in Illinois and was instrumental in founding the NAACP and the National Assoc of Colored Women (NACW).²⁴ Amanda's racial crossover reached its pinnacle, in a concrete way, with the convening of the interracial advisory board and the at-large supporters, but even these influential leaders from African American and white Methodism could not keep the Amanda Smith Home in financial solvency.

The final scenario encapsulating her racial crossover occurred when she retired from her responsibilities at the school and took up residence in a home built specifically for her on the Florida property owned by a wealthy, white holiness Methodist, George Sebring. Even since he was sanctified under her preaching, he promised Amanda a place to live when needed. Due to Jim Crow restrictions detailing where African Americans could and could not live, her house was out of bounds per the color line. "Defying the South's rigid color line, Sebring built Smith's cottage just south of his own house. A local resident predicted possible trouble because her bungalow was 'not in colored town,' but just south of the town founder's."²⁵ No trouble erupted, and Amanda even joined the local white Methodist Episcopal Church. She died not long after, an African American Methodist living in a white community and attending a white church, a racial crossover to the end.

A snapshot of Emma Ray's racial crossover was taken at a 1927 tent meeting in Snohomish, Washington. Lined up in two rows in front of a large, circus-like, white tent were thirty, mostly elderly, male and female leaders in the Free Methodist denomination. Emma was seated in the front and center, the one lone African American woman. This photo encapsulated the last thirty years of her life when she and her husband, L.P., worshipped, preached, and did urban mission work alongside white Free Methodists.

Emma, who was born into slavery and grew up in poverty in an African American shanty town in Missouri, moved to Seattle following the devastating fire of 1889 because L.P., a stonemason by trade, could find work rebuilding the city. She easily became acquainted with Seattle's small African American community. Within a few months, she and L.P. were both converted in the AME Church. They were then introduced to the doctrine of sanctification by itinerant, white holiness evangelists, and within a short time, they were sanctified. When Emma and L.P. related their experience to the congregation, the pastor and some of the laity criticized them. Despite a pastoral change, the campaign against them continued, so they looked around at other churches in Seattle sympathetic to sanctification. Eventually they joined the all-white Pine Street Free Methodist Church. From then on, they were completely taken up with Free Methodist organizations in Seattle and Washington state. They volunteered weekly at the Free Methodist Olive Branch Mission; they preached revival meetings in Free Methodist churches around Washington and were licensed by the denomination as Conference Evangelists. Emma's autobiography, complete with written endorsements of their ministry by denominational leaders, was published by the Free Methodist Publishing House. At her funeral service in the First Free Methodist Church, the church adjacent to Seattle Pacific College, ten Free Methodist ministers presided.

Because Emma was a permanent resident in Seattle during the Progressive Era, her racial crossover cannot be understood apart from the city's context, for it indelibly shaped her choices.

Unlike Amanda, Emma did not itinerate. Her marriage to and evangelistic partnership with L.P., kept her close to home where there were few African Americans. In 1900, only 406 African Americans lived in Seattle. This number increased slowly, roughly 500 more each decade from 1910-1940, until the outbreak of World War II when new factories were opened to manufacture war-related goods. Then African Americans from other cities came to Seattle in large numbers for employment.²⁶ For church-goers like Emma, a small community meant only two choices on a Sunday morning, either Jones Street AME or Mount Zion Baptist. When things went awry at the AME Church, her sole option, without a racial crossover, was the Baptist church, whose Calvinist theology was even further afield from her Wesleyan preferences.

Few African Americans also meant that the recipients of her outreach ministry in the downtown, transient neighborhoods were white, an atypical situation where she, an African American woman, ministered to white prostitutes, white drug addicts, white drunkards, white convicts, or white gold seekers returning empty-handed from Alaska. Emma made note of the few “coloreds” who came to the mission. One particularly harsh winter in Seattle, she remarked that of those in line for an evening meal, there were “one hundred white people to every colored person.”²⁷ As she visited in the Seattle jails, she observed that it was “a rare case in those days to see a colored prisoner. Most of the work [in the jail] was exclusively among the white people.”²⁸

When Emma and L.P. left Seattle and ran a mission in Kansas City in 1900-02, they attended only to the African American community, which was possible because the population exceeded 17,000 or nearly 11% of the city’s residents.²⁹ Their mission, in a desperately impoverished neighborhood known as Hick’s Hollow, was geared toward African American children. They provided clothes, meals, a warm place to spend the day in the winter, trips to the park in the summer, and weekly Sunday school at one in the afternoon. Emma explained about the time that “We couldn’t have it until one o’clock, as the people caroused all night and didn’t get up early enough in the morning for the children to come at the usual hour.”³⁰ They also held evangelistic services, beginning with an hour-long street meeting of singing and preaching staged between two saloons. Whites did not normally attend the services, so when the white, neighborhood butcher who was a habitual drunkard, showed up one evening, she recorded it in her autobiography. While in Kansas City, she visited African American prisoners in the jails. The sight of the prisoners broke Emma’s heart. “... I went in and saw so many of my own women, men, and girls from fourteen up, also boys. Their quarters were not pleasant, as they were dark closets. Some were thrown in there for the smallest trifles, but some had committed crimes as dark as those we had seen in other places.”³¹

The timing of her work with African Americans in Kansas City coincided with the promotion of racial uplift by AME leaders and race women, like Mary Church Terrell, the first president of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). In a speech given in 1900, the year Emma began the mission in Hick’s Hollow, Terrell announced the organization’s motto of racial uplift, “lifting as they climb.” She went on to explain what racial uplift entailed.

It has been suggested, and very appropriately, I think, that this Association should take as its motto—Lifting as we climb. In no way could we live up to such a sentiment better than by coming into a closer touch with the masses of women, by whom, whether we will or not, the world will always judge the womanhood of our race. *Even though we wish to shun them, and hold ourselves entirely aloof from them,* we cannot escape the consequences of their acts. So, that, if the call of duty were disregarded altogether, policy and self-preservation would demand that we *go down* among the lowly, the illiterate, and even the victims to whom we are bound by the ties of race and sex, and put forth every possible effort to uplift and reclaim them.³²

Had Emma heard this speech, she would not connected racial uplift, as explained by Terrell, with her mission work among African Americans. She and L.P. did not “go down among the lowly”

because they already resided among them, facing unemployment as they did, opening a bare cupboard at dinnertime, and contracting smallpox along with their neighbors. Although she had some misgivings at first due to the noise and “insanitary conditions,” she wrote that they “had the place papered and cleaned and moved right into one of the roughest and most notorious corners at ‘Hick’s Hollow,’ 590 Lydia Street, in the same building as our Mission. Some good saints came to help us and we prayed the Lord to clean up that place.”³³

Purposely going to places like Hick’s Hollow was Emma’s regular practice from the day of her conversion went she went to her acquaintances in the bar and dance hall to tell them of her experience. She spent entire afternoons among the poor and outcast of Seattle, visiting the hospitals, jails, brothels, even the mudflats where drug addicts congregated. On one of her first visits to the jail, she met a group of Free Methodists who conducted evangelistic services for the inmates. These Free Methodists preached the gospel to the poor that B.T. Roberts, the denomination’s founder, prescribed as integral to Christian faith and practice. In the first issue of the *Earnest Christian*, what would become the denomination’s journal, Roberts argued for a “preferential option for the poor.”³⁴

In this respect the Church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. She must see to it, that the gospel is preached to the poor. With them, peculiar pains must be taken. The message of the minister must be adapted to their wants and conditions. The greatest trophies of saving grace must be sought among them. ... Thus the duty of preaching the gospel to the poor is enjoined, by the plainest precepts and examples. This is the standing proof of the Divine mission of the Church. In her regard for the poor, Christianity asserts her superiority to all systems of human origin.³⁵

During the Progressive Era, the Free Methodist church sponsored a “remarkable chain” of urban mission work.³⁶ “It was not uncommon for even small Free Methodist congregations to sponsor rescue missions or homes for unwed mothers, hold street meetings, or, at least, circulate religious literature among the poor.”³⁷ This Free Methodist practice resonated with Emma, who found a particular joy in her work with the poor. “We felt very free when we went to minister to the poor. They always received us gladly. We were made to feel some of the sufferings of Christ. ... It was a great pleasure for us to go on the streets, for there we had willing hearers, and it rejoiced our hearts to sing and testify to the poor down-and-outs on the street.”³⁸

Her work among the poor separated Emma from the middle-class African American community in Seattle. Although their number was small, there was a fixed chasm demarcating middle and lower-class African Americans. The middle-class were upwardly mobile with settled jobs, houses, memberships in various civic, church, and fraternal organizations; in short, they enjoyed a permanent existence. They belonged to one of the two African American churches, like Emma, who quickly joined the AME church, helped to found the Frances Harper Colored Unit of the WCTU, and served as its president. Along with promoting temperance, the WCTU women ministered to people living in the Yesler-Jackson area, a working-class transient neighborhood south of downtown, where the rooming houses, saloons, gambling spots, movie houses, and brothels were located.

Their AME minister complained about the “class of people” who were receiving the ministrations of the WCTU women; he wanted them to concentrate instead on their own class, particularly their church whose heavy debt needed the attention of the women’s fund-raising activities. Eventually, the minister’s criticisms prevailed, and the WCTU unit disbanded. This “schism that destroyed the Frances Ellen Harper WCTU reflected much deeper fissures in the small black community,” according to Quintard Taylor. “The pioneers, a self-defined and increasingly self-contained group, viewed themselves as the only real community because of their permanence, their middle-class views and values, and their commitment to community-based organizations and institutions. The transients, the usually impoverished single men and

women who resided in the tideflats or along lower Jackson Street, were often ignored by the middle-class community. Black Seattle, by narrowly defining community, acted much like its white and Asian counterparts.”³⁹

Although her original unit folded, Emma remained active in the WCTU by crossing over the racial lines to attend white meetings because there was not another African American unit. She also kept on with the work that the WCTU women had begun, visiting the jail with white co-workers. Once her WCTU unit folded, Emma never again did outreach work in Seattle with an African American with the exception of L.P. The class conflict within the African American community in Seattle not only closed the WCTU unit, but it also forced Emma further from her own people.

Even her clothing attested to her transition away from the African American middle-class community. In a group photo of her WCTU union, Emma dressed like her contemporaries in a close-fitting, two-piece dress with small buttons and ribbon trim on the bodice and a white, lacy collar. Her clothing resembled that of race women, as discussed above. Thirty years later, in the picture on the frontispiece of her autobiography, her clothing was simple and manly. Her dark suit jacket was identical to that worn by L.P., who was next to her in the picture, and her white shirt was topped by a ministerial collar. She wore the same attire, a dark suit with what appears to be a ministerial collar, in the photo taken of the Free Methodist church leaders. Like Amanda, who purposely adopted Quaker-like clothing as she became a public preacher, Emma dressed in the attire of a male minister.

But it was not clothing that Emma worried about in her autobiography; it was her hair. From the age of eleven, she wore false hair in what was called a chignon or a waterfall. She described it as a “great big amount of hair with wires run through to hold it on and make it light and puffy.” She wore that style for nearly thirty years until she was convicted that it was a source of vanity and separated her from God.

I had worn it so long that it had killed the roots of my hair, and I was partially bald, and I would not listen to any suggestions about putting it away. ... It took me a long time to get my hair all fixed and curled. I had to dye it to keep it black. I spent many dollars upon invisible pins and nets, besides a whole lot of worry as to whether I had it on straight or not. I did not want anyone to know I wore it, and many times I was late getting to church Sunday morning because I would stand before the glass to see if I had it good and secure, and I often tried my husband by taking so much time. I began to get tired of it and I would do it up Saturday nights all ready for the Sabbath, but somehow I could not fix it right.⁴⁰

She felt a divine directive to remove the false hair with its accoutrements, so she took it off and threw it in the fire. She ended the story with these words, “I took my comb and brush and brushed what little hair I had. I made me a little bonnet and put streamers of ribbon and tied them under my chin. The ribbons cover the bald places on the back of my head, where the hairpins had worn the hair off. That night my sleep was so peaceful.”⁴¹ Through the change in her hairstyle as well as her clothing, her racial crossover from African American middle-class respectability to the holiness Free Methodists can be visibly traced.

Emma’s racial crossover also reflected a clash in beliefs with her AME church concerning sanctification. After she first heard it explained, she yearned for the experience of sanctification and recalled a time when she even ceased her washing to stand still over the tub praying to be sanctified.⁴² Finally, it happened.

... all of a sudden it seemed that a streak of lightning had struck over the corner of the house, and it struck me on the top of the head, and went through my body from head to foot like liquid fire, and my whole body tingled. I tried to rise and

was so weak I fell back upon the lounge and I said, "What, Lord?" and there came another dash of glory through my being and a voice inside of me said, "Holy." I tried to rise, but had not the strength and I cried, "O, glory! The Holy Ghost has come into my heart." As my strength began to return, I felt a passion, such a love for souls as I had never felt before. I saw a lost world. My heart became hot. A fire of holy, abiding love for God and souls was kindled at that hour and I felt to say with Isaiah, "Here am I, Lord, send me." It was the fire that still burns in my soul this very moment, and I feel it will last until Jesus comes.⁴³

When their AME community tried to silence them on sanctification, she recounted feeling under "persecution." "We had four different pastors and none of them seemed to understand us, and did not want us to testify to the experience of entire sanctification, although it was a Methodist doctrine. We decided to go where we could have fellowship."⁴⁴ Without a racial crossover, there was nowhere else to go in Seattle at the time to "have fellowship" on sanctification.

By joining the Pine Street Free Methodist church, however, they left behind the pivotal center of the African American community in the Progressive Era -- the black church. In a minister's statement at the time, the church's importance to racial uplift was underscored. "The church is a social center, a club, a place of self-expression for the Negroes, and they support it because it remains the one resort in the community where they may develop their latent powers without embarrassment or restraint."⁴⁵ Such was the case in Seattle where "Jones Street AME and Mount Zion Baptist churches were the nexus of community social life."⁴⁶ It was a rare phenomenon, noted an early pioneer in the city, for African Americans to attend a white church. "There were very few Black people who attended White churches in those days. ... mostly Black people attended Black churches and the churches were considered Black."⁴⁷ Without the church, Emma and L.P. had no other ties to the African American community. Neither belonged to any fraternal or civic organizations because their extra-curricular activities, particularly drinking, were too tempting for a recovering alcoholic like L.P. Once they joined the Free Methodists, a holiness denomination with strict regulations for holy living, all kinds of activities were forbidden anyway, such as membership in secret societies, dancing, gambling, and of course, drinking. And without extended family in Seattle or children to provide other avenues into the African American community, they did not leave much behind in their racial crossover when they joined the Free Methodist Church..

The racial crossovers of Emma Ray and Amanda Berry Smith had two notable elements in common. First, occupying the center stage in both was a white holiness community. Thanks to the early imprimatur of leaders in the white holiness movement, such as Phoebe and Walter Palmer, whose home Amanda regularly frequented in the 1870s when attending the weekly Tuesday Meeting, her crossover within white Methodism was the holiness movement. She spoke at holiness camp meetings, particularly at Ocean Grove and Mountain Lake. She invited a holiness Methodist bishop, James N. Fitzgerald of St. Louis, to serve on her interracial advisory board. She even died in the care of a white holiness advocate, George Sebring. Emma crossed over to the embrace of the Free Methodists, who supported her sanctification experience and provided opportunities for preaching and urban mission work. Even at a time of personal illness, when she was suffering from neuralgia that left part of her face temporarily paralyzed, two Free Methodist ministers came out to her home to offer prayers and medicine for her healing. Their care for her continued to her death.

Second, their work as evangelists set them apart from AME race women whose primary purpose was racial uplift. It was not that Emma and Amanda were cavalier about the plight of African Americans. After all, they were both born into slavery with firsthand experience of the brutality of that system. Both relate incidents of racism in their autobiography, being denied

access to a night's lodging, or being forced to the back of the train. And both established institutions that worked, for a time, at racial uplift. However, they were first and foremost evangelists whose calling was to preach the gospel to anyone and everyone, no matter the race or denomination.

Their racial crossovers differed, however, in one respect; that is, Amanda crossed back and forth throughout her entire ministry, moving between African American and white gatherings, whereas Emma's racial crossover happened once. After all, she was a permanent resident of Seattle, so her choices were circumscribed by that one city. She was not a traveler. After her two-year "visit back East," she returned to Seattle and journeyed no further north than the Canadian border, south only to Portland, and west only to Yakima in western Washington. An itinerant evangelist like Amanda possessed the freedom to leave, to move on when theological or racial conflicts arose. Such mobility virtually guaranteed an open reception and platform.⁴⁸ Amanda's travels also enabled her to build a vast array of interracial contacts and support within the white holiness movement, the AME church, and the women's club movement, both white and African American.

Looking outward from this close analysis of racial crossovers to their larger impact, we contend that this study has uncovered previously unexplored venues of race relations in Methodism during the Progressive Era, such as Amanda's interracial advisory board and Emma's official position as a conference evangelist in the Free Methodist Church. It has brought to light African American women initiating conversations and plans with whites. And it has shown that an exigency for evangelism can bridge racial barriers during a national nadir of race relations.

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- ¹ Lewis V. Baldwin, "New Directions for the Study of Blacks in Methodism," in *Rethinking Methodist History: A Bicentennial Historical Consultation*, eds. Russell E. Richey and Kenneth E. Rowe (Nashville: Kingswood, 1985), 190.
- ² Reginald F. Hildebrand, *The Times Were Strange And Stirring* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1995).
- ³ Peter C. Murray, *Methodists and the Crucible of Race, 1930-1975* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 2004).
- ⁴ Harry V. Richardson, *Dark Salvation: The Story of Methodism as It Developed Among Blacks In America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976).
- ⁵ William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church: Whither Thou Goest?* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984).
- ⁶ Ronald C. White, "'Our Brother in Black': Methodism and Racial Reform in the Progressive Era," *The Drew Gateway* 54 (1984), 105. The four men featured in this study are Atticus Greene Haygood, Albion W. Tourgee, Willis D. Weatherford, and Will Alexander.
- ⁷ Pamela E. Klassen, "The Robes of Womanhood: Dress and Authenticity among African American Methodist Women in the Nineteenth Century," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, 14 (2004): 39-82 and Jualynne E. Dodson, *Engendering Church: Women, Power, and the AME Church* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).
- ⁸ Albert G. Miller, *Elevating the Race: Theophilus G. Steward, Black Theology, and the Making of an African American Civil Society, 1865-1924* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2003).
- ⁹ Julius H. Bailey, *Around the Family Altar: Domesticity in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1865-1900* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).
- ¹⁰ Rayford W. Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson* (London: Collier Books, 1965), originally published as *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: Dial, 1954).
- ¹¹ Amanda Smith, *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, The Colored Evangelist* (Chicago: Christian Witness, 1921), 79.
- ¹² Smith, *An Autobiography*, 147-48.
- ¹³ Adrienne M. Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith: From Washerwoman to Evangelist* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1998), 58.
- ¹⁴ E. H. Stokes, comp., *Ocean Grove. Its Origins and Progress, As Shown in the Annual Reports Presented by the President, to which Are Added Other Papers of Interest* (Published by Order of the Association, 1874), 75-76; quoted in Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 58.
- ¹⁵ Susie C. Stanley, *Holy Boldness: Women Preachers' Autobiographies and the Sanctified Self* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2002), 146.
- ¹⁶ Klassen, "The Robes of Womanhood," 68.
- ¹⁷ See Dodson, *Engendering Church*, 111-13 and Bailey, *Around the Family Altar*, 68-71.
- ¹⁸ Dodson, *Engendering Church*, 72.
- ¹⁹ Klassen, "The Robes of Womanhood," 59.
- ²⁰ Sieglinde Lemke, "Introduction" in Elizabeth Lindsay Davis, *Lifting As They Climb* (1933); reprinted (New York, NY: G.K. Hall, 1996), xix.
- ²¹ Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 105.
- ²² Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 122.
- ²³ Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 131-32, 134.
- ²⁴ As supporters, they offered occasional help particularly in fund raising. Hallie Brown and Lucy Thurman invited Amanda to be a "distinguished visitor" at the 1903 meeting of the Illinois Federation of Colored Women's Clubs in order to help her in a tangible way with fund raising. Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 132.
- ²⁵ Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 140.
- ²⁶ Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1994), 7. Lawrence de Graaf suggests that the remoteness of the West "limited the size of the black population and hence precluded the formation of large racial communities." Lawrence de Graaf, "Race, Sex, and Region: Black Women in the American West, 1850-1920," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (May 1980), 311. While Emma lived in Seattle, Asians were the largest minority population; as such they were more the targets of racism than African Americans.
- ²⁷ Emma J. Ray, *Twice Sold, Twice Ransomed: Autobiography of Mr. and Mrs. L. P. Ray* (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1926), 234.
- ²⁸ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 73.
- ²⁹ Statistics from www.census.gov. Kansas City at the time had the largest percentage of African Americans in a Missouri city. Even though St. Louis had a larger number of African Americans, the percentage compared to the total was only 6.4%.

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- ³⁰ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 126.
- ³¹ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 114.
- ³² Lemke, "Introduction," xix; quoted in Beverly Washington Jones, *Quest for Equality: The Life and Writings of Mary Eliza Church Terrell, 1863-1954*, in Hine, ed., *Black Women in United States History*, vol. 13, (New York: Carlson, 1990): 144. For Evelyn Brooks-Higginbotham's criticism of this "condescending" approach, see *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1993): 63. Italics added.
- ³³ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 121-22.
- ³⁴ This is a term from present-day Latin American Liberation Theology that William Kostlevy, Howard A. Snyder, and others use to emphasize Free Methodism's overriding commitment to the poor. For example, see Howard A. Snyder, *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 550. See also fn. 37.
- ³⁵ Snyder, *Populist Saints*, 549.
- ³⁶ Snyder, *Populist Saints*, 669.
- ³⁷ William Kostlevy, "Benjamin Titus Roberts and the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' in the Early Free Methodist Church," in *Poverty and Ecclesiology: Nineteenth-Century Evangelicals in the Light of Liberation Theology*, ed. Anthony L. Dunnivant (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 66; quoted in Snyder, *Populist Saints*, 669.
- ³⁸ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 91.
- ³⁹ Taylor, *Forging of a Black Community*, 39.
- ⁴⁰ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 93-94.
- ⁴¹ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 94-95.
- ⁴² Ray, *Twice Sold*, 61.
- ⁴³ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 63.
- ⁴⁴ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 91.
- ⁴⁵ Daniel G. Hill, "The Negro in Oregon: A Survey" (M.A. Thesis, University of Oregon, 1932), p. 63; quoted in Taylor, *Forging of a Black Community*, 37.
- ⁴⁶ Taylor, *Forging of a Black Community*, 38.
- ⁴⁷ Esther Hall Mumford, ed. *Seven Stars and Orion: Reflections of the Past* (Seattle: Ananse Press, 1986). Interview with Muriel Pollard.
- ⁴⁸ Itinerancy enabled another AME woman evangelist a generation before Amanda to create a racial crossover in her audiences. From her home base in Philadelphia, Jarena Lee (1783-?) also preached wherever a welcome was available as she itinerated throughout New England, north into Canada, and west into Ohio. Across the miles, she crossed denominational barriers as well as racial lines. She preached to Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, Wesleyan Methodists and Presbyterians, sometimes one denomination at a time, sometimes several together. In a brief diatribe in her autobiography, she decried denominationalism. "Oh, how I long to see the day when Christians will meet on one common platform—Jesus of Nazareth—and cease their bickerings and contentions about non-essentials—when 'our Church' shall be less debated, but 'our Jesus' shall be all in all." In a similar vein, she preached to audiences of "whites," "coloreds," "Indians," "whites and coloreds," "slaves and the holders." A particularly inclusive audience, both denominationally and racially, heard her preach at Wilkesbarre: "I spoke at Wilkesbarre to both White and Colored, Baptists and Methodists, and had an invitation to preach in the afternoon, had good congregations, and tears of contrition were visible in many places."