



From William Apes, *A Son of the Forest: The Experience of William Apes a Native of the Forest, Written by Himself*, 37-38 (1831).

About this time the Methodists began to hold meetings in the neighbourhood . . . And it was openly said that the character of a respectable[sic] man would receive a stain, and a deep one too, by attending one of their meetings. Indeed the stories circulated about them were bad enough to deter people of "character!" from attending the Methodist ministry. But it had no effect on me. I thought I had no character to lose in the estimation of those who were accounted great. For what cared they for me? They had possession of the red man's inheritance, and had deprived me of liberty; with this they were satisfied, and could do as they pleased; therefore, I thought I could do as I pleased, measurably. I therefore went to hear the noisy Methodists. When I reached the house I found a clever company. They did not appear to differ much from "respectable" people. They were neatly and decently clothed, and I could not see that they differed from other people except in their behaviour, which was more kind and gentlemanly. Their countenance was heavenly, their songs were like sweetest music—in their manners they were plain. Their language was not fashioned after the wisdom of men. When the minister preached he spoke as one having authority. The exercises were accompanied by the power of God. His people shouted for joy—while sinners wept. This being the first time I had ever attended a meeting of this kind, all things of course appeared new to me. I was very far from forming the opinion that most of the neighborhood entertained about them. From this time I became more serious, and soon went to hear the Methodists again, and was constrained to believe that they were the true people of God. . . .

I now attended these meetings constantly, and although I was a sinner before God, yet I felt no disposition to laugh or scoff. I make this observation because so many people went to these meetings to make fun. This was a common thing, and I often wondered how persons who professed to be considered great, i.e. "ladies and gentlemen," would so far disgrace themselves as to scoff in the house of God, and at his holy services.

. . . The power of the Holy Ghost moved forth among the people—the spirit's influence was felt at every meeting—the people of God were built up in their faith—their confidence in the Lord of hosts gathered strength, while many sinners were alarmed, and began to cry aloud for mercy. In a little time the work rolled onward like an overwhelming flood. Now the Methodists and all who attended their meetings were greatly persecuted. All denominations were up in arms against them, because the Lord was blessing their labours and making them (a poor despised people) his instruments in the conversion of sinners.