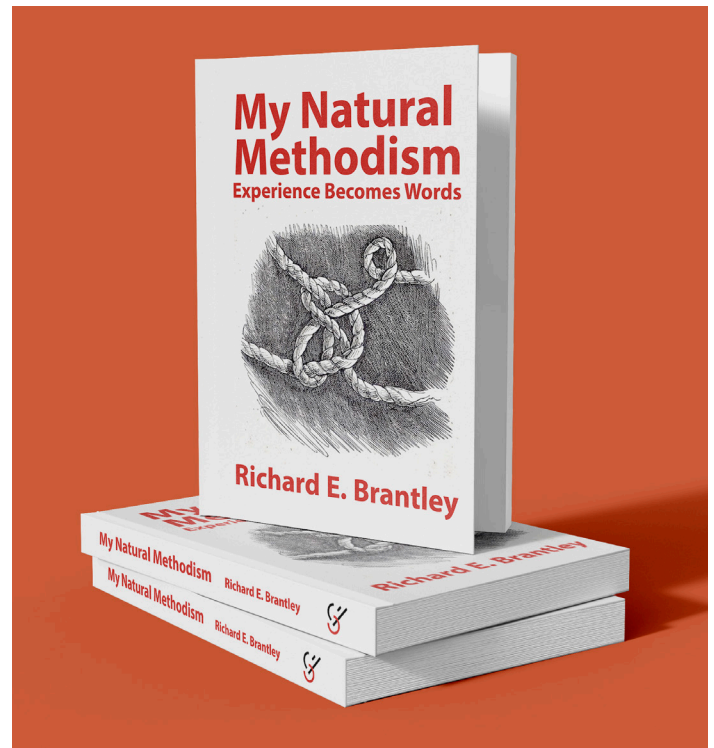


# My Natural Methodism

by Richard E. Brantley  
published by Culicidae Press

*My Natural Methodism*, reflecting on a lifetime's participation in Anglo-American studies, integrates memoir and literary scholarship. Any child's formative years may define their hiding places of interpretive power, but my intellectual and my spiritual autobiography morph specifically toward reconsidering and extending my seven-volume perspective on an international cultural poetic. During my youth, *faith in experience* and the *experience of faith* overlapped, creating a binocular way of seeing that I realize, in retrospect, prepared me to discover a science/religion dialogue of Anglo-American literature. This latest effort to overhear such rich conversation infuses a contemporary norm of scholarly objectivity with the subjective position of the interpreter, highlighting my motivating inspiration. As an innovative genre of interpretive inquiry—as a memoir/lit-crit conjunction of hybrid vigor—this culminating volume of my scholarly work models a personal investment—leading to professional commitment—across disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences.

In independent and private terms, as well as on the public plane of an academic discourse, I reaffirm a historical and interdisciplinary, and add an autobiographical, method of close reading. I believe the overall accounting I offer is at least as first-hand and pressing as it is also detached and unbiased. My self-portrait of the critic as a young man embodies what I have cumulatively argued Charles Lamb meant in calling Wordsworth's poetry "natural methodism." Ultimately, *my* natural methodism and Wordsworth's alike depended on cross-pollination between British



empiricism and trans-Atlantic revivalism, which, in turn, became an empirical/evangelical dialect of British and American literary history. I compare my version of science *versus* religion with that of my favorite authors, and vice versa. Readers of such a canon may do likewise, first by standing on the scientific, religious, and creative ground of experience, and then by crediting the spiritual as well as natural vision of Romantic to Modern Anglo-America.

I have made sure that the literary contextualizing in my eighth monograph includes informal touches from my newly subjective urgency, just as, through integration or interweaving, the memoir contains literary echoes that give it a formal tone. What is the payoff? Beyond the academy, *My Natural Methodism* illustrates the prevalent human habit, and represents the very humane signature, of interpretive inquiry. Such a universal penchant can never be fully objective, but also should never be only subjective. Interpretation is not a question of one or the other of these paired methods of investigation but the use of both at once. Whether as the experience of the interpreter or as a value of interpretation, *Both/And* is the lesson. From Locke, Wesley, and Edwards, through Wordsworth and Dickinson, and perhaps on to George Eliot and Frederick Douglass, or T. S. Eliot and Marianne Moore, science and religion appear to be not so much in conflict as in mutually enriching communion.

## Praise for My Natural Methodism

*In this characteristically generous-spirited, intellectually energetic new book, Richard Brantley pays tribute to family members, teachers, and authors who inspired his life's intellectual-spiritual journey. Borrowing his title phrase from Charles Lamb's review of Wordsworth's "The Excursion," Brantley reflects on how "natural methodism" accounts for science/faith conjunctions in Anglo-American writing, with special emphasis on Romantic and post-Romantic writers Wordsworth, Emerson, and Dickinson while applying his thesis to a host of later poets and novelists including Eliot, Auden, and Marilynne Robinson. In this time of STEM dominance in academia and valuation of curricula chiefly for immediate job prospects, Brantley makes a powerful case for literature's enduring impact. And he does so with joy and gratitude.*

**Jane Eberwein, Distinguished Professor of English Emerita, Department of English, Oakland University**

*My Natural Methodism is Richard Brantley's eighth book. It is an autobiography rich with literary criticism, its pages warm with references to the signatures of his life and his reading. His heartfelt intelligence is a gift for thoughtful readers to examine repeatedly. They will mark their place in the book and think about their own lives, their meanderings, intellectual and otherwise.*

**Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., Professor Emeritus, Department of English, University of Connecticut, Storrs**

*In My Natural Methodism: Experience Becomes Words, Richard E. Brantley culminates his "career-long quest for aesthetic understanding" of the Romantic influence in Anglo-American culture. He does so by deftly interweaving autobiography with scholarly analysis, thereby incorporating personal experience in what he variously describes as a "memoir/lit-crit hybrid." He seeks nothing less than the "disciplinary re-enchantment" needed to combat the current decline of the humanities. The book brings both/and logic to academic writing that Brantley sees as too narrowly devoted to objectivity, at the expense of the subjective life blood of literature and the arts. Thus, intertwining formative years with professional expertise, and gracing his hybrid with humor and humility, Brantley elegantly manages his dialogue with the rich Anglo-American tradition of science, religion, and literature.*

**Paul Crumbley, Professor Emeritus, Department of English, Utah State University**

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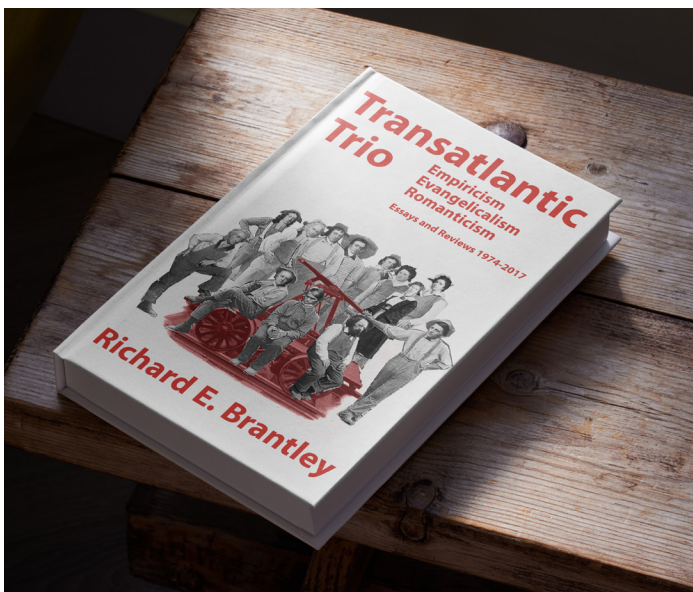
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Also available: The companion volume to *My Natural Methodism* by Richard E. Brantley: *Transatlantic Trio: Empiricism, Evangelicalism, Romanticism*, published in 2017 by Culicidae Press.