THE DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL REVIEW

Autumn 1969

A Prayer for Methodist Preachers

Almighty God and heavenly Father, who of thine infinite love and goodness towards us hast given to us thy only and most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ to be our redeemer and the author of everlasting life; who after he had made perfect our redemption by his death, and was ascended into heaven, sent abroad into the world his apostles, prophets, evangelists, doctors, and pastors, by whose labour and ministry he gathered together a great flock in all the parts of the world, to set forth the eternal praise of thy holy name; for these so great benefits of thy eternal goodness, and for that thou hast vouchsafed to call these thy servants here present to the same office and ministry appointed for the salvation of mankind, we render unto thee most hearty thanks, we praise and worship thee; and we humbly beseech thee, by the same thy blessed Son, to grant unto all who either here or elsewhere call upon thy holy name that we may continue to show ourselves thankful unto thee for these and all other thy benefits, and that we may daily increase and go forward in the knowledge and faith of thee and thy Son by the Holy Spirit. So that as well by these thy ministers, as by them over whom they shall be appointed thy ministers, thy holy name may be for ever glorified, and thy blessed kingdom enlarged, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

[From "The Form and Manner of ordaining of Elders" in John Wesley's *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America: with other occasional services*, London, 1784.]

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Bicentennial of The American Methodist Preacher 1769-1969

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The Methodist Preacher

Two hundred years ago a new species of religious worker was transplanted to the American continent. He was to have as much importance as any and more importance than most both in consolidating religious observance in settled communities and in developing religion on the expanding frontier. He was familiarly known as "The Methodist Preacher." The title has tended to stick, even though the battle has long been won in favour of those who claimed that Methodist ministers should fulfil all the ecclesiastical roles of the episcopalian clergyman. When John Wesley first called the itinerant Methodist preacher into existence in England nearly 230 years ago, however, he felt it essential clearly to distinguish him both from the ordained minister of the Church of England (such as Wesley himself) and from the layman whom Wesley authorised to preach to his neighbours in his spare time—the "local preacher." The term "Methodist preacher" was in general applied to the layman who gave himself full time to a preaching and pastoral ministry, and was supported by the societies whom he served, but who both by tradition and by theology was not authorised to administer the sacraments. America constituted the laboratory in which the Methodist preacher was first and most clearly transformed into the Methodist minister, though he has never quite lost the spirit of evangelical adventure, of Christian brotherhood rather than fatherhood, that tended to cling to the old term.

When I suggested to the editorial committee of our *Divinity School Review* that we should devote this issue to the Methodist preacher in America through two hundred years they heartily agreed, perhaps the more heartily because they then proceeded to impose upon me the fate of many proposers of resolutions—I was asked to implement my own suggestion by serving as "Guest editor." Here is the result, for which I now express in public print to the contributors what I have already expressed in private letters—my warm gratitude for their articles, especially as they were prepared amid the many difficulties of very busy lives. All the contributors live in different states, though most are alumni of Duke or have some other close affiliation. This, however, was not the basis of the invitation extended to them, but rather their competence in the particular field

of study upon which they were asked to write. You will find here articles by Professor Norman W. Spellmann of Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas; Professor Douglas R. Chandler of Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D. C.; Professor Charles A. Rogers of Evangelical Theological Seminary, Naperville, Illinois; Professor William B. Gravely, of the University of Denver, Denver, Colorado; and Bishop W. Kenneth Goodson, Bishop of the Birmingham area of the United Methodist Church.

A bicentenary celebration is normally the occasion for some emphasis upon history, and this special issue is no exception. Nevertheless we have tried to touch upon various aspects of the history of the Methodist preacher, and to deal not only with his preaching but with his theology and social concerns, at least through representative sampling. We end on a prophetic note, offering an example of a Methodist preacher of today issuing a challenge to his contemporaries.

It was on October 21, 1769, that Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore landed at Gloucester Point, New Jersey, and speedily made their way to Philadelphia en route to New York. They were the first two itinerant Methodist preachers sent by John Wesley in answer to appeals for help from New York. The opening article describes something of the origin of this appeal, briefly characterises "Wesley's Early Preachers in America"—ten in all—and tries to assess the value of their contribution to American Methodism. Perhaps I should warn you that the writer is a Britisher, though I do not believe that it is British prejudice that causes him to place a higher value than has sometimes been placed upon these pioneer labours in guiding an ebullient ecclesiastical infant.

Professor Norman Spellmann follows with an article on "The Early Native Methodist Preachers," those who received their training and eventually took over control from the first group sent by Wesley. From among the many he has singled out four who made special contributions, and whose names should be familiar to all students of American Methodist history. William Watters is claimed as the first native American Methodist itinerant. In many things similar to Watters was Philip Gatch, the second to serve in this capacity. Better known to many from his autobiography and other studies is the somewhat more romantic figure of Freeborn Garrettson. These three were born in Maryland, the first two in 1751, the last a year later. Dr. Spellmann's fourth selection is Jesse Lee, the first native Virginian to enter the Methodist ministry, born in 1758.

He became not only a great leader, the apostle of New England, but the church's first historian.

Professor Douglas R. Chandler has prepared a charming little study which also touches upon Jesse Lee, entitled "Enthusiasm vs. Education? Early Methodist Preachers in New England." In this he takes up the problem which Wesley had faced in old England—how far could preachers with a limited education be acceptable in an area accustomed to learned if not always moving sermons? A nummer of thumbnail sketches of southern preachers who invaded the educated territory of New England with their "energetic pulpit manner" brings to life the typical Methodist preacher of long ago, who has not quite disappeared from the modern scene.

In "The Theological Heritage of the Early Methodist Preachers" Professor Charles Rogers demonstrates how closely they were linked with the evangelical teaching of John Wesley in their emphasis upon the doctrines of original sin, salvation by faith, and sanctification. He also points out that this was not merely a general theological atmosphere which they breathed but a deliberately adopted doctrinal code. This was first crystallized into a systematic theology in Asa Shinn's *An Essay on the Plan of Salvation*, published in 1813, but the major theological influence upon the Methodist preachers of the first half of the nineteenth century was the British Methodist Richard Watson, whose *Theological Institutes* first appeared in the United States a decade after Shinn's book.

In America as well as in Britain and elsewhere the Methodist preacher has been characterised throughout his history by a strong concern for social service and for social justice. Professor William Gravely draws our attention to one aspect of this in a brilliant study entitled: "Methodist Preachers, Slavery and Caste: Types of Social Concern in Antebellum America." This outlines Methodist attitudes to slavery from 1784 onwards, encompassing the rise of the great Methodist black denominations. Professor Gravely traces the shift within white Methodism from a challenge against slavery as an evil social institution to a religious concern for the slaves within an imperfect system reluctantly accepted—a concern which often found vent in revivalism aimed at the spiritual regeneration of the slave, on the assumption that his liberation was impossible. He demonstrates how in the 1840's this acquiescent attitude was fiercely challenged and as fiercely defended, the conflict forming one of the major causes of the division between north and south, in the Methodist Church as in the nation as a whole.

With the closing article we have a change of pace from the lecture to the sermon, from the academic to the devotional, from the study of the past to the challenge of the present. We are fortunate in being able to reveal in action one of the prophetic Methodist preachers of our own day. We present excerpts from an address delivered by one of our own distinguished alumni, Bishop Kenneth Goodson, on the present quadrennial theme of the United Methodist Church—"A New Church for a New World." Those who know Bishop Goodson will recognize his racy style and individual accent in this lightly edited version preserved by means of recording tape from an occasion at which I myself was present. I can personally witness to the great emotional impact originally made by our colleague upon a huge gathering, and I believe that some of his anecdotes and examples of somewhat unorthodox types of ministry tailored for modern need may well provide a healthy stimulus to all of us. Thus our study of the Methodist preachers of yesterday, reinforced by a living document furnished by one of today, may enable us to be more nearly the devoted, enthusiastic, and adventurous Methodist preachers who are needed for the different world of tomorrow.

Frank Baker.

Wesley's Early Preachers in America

Frank Baker
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The scattered Methodist societies which arose in America during the 1760's owed their birth and initial sustenance not only to individuals but to a general movement of pietism and revival which had long been spreading over Europe and America, being known here as The Great Awakening. One of the chief carriers of the religious infection was a member of the Wesleys' Holy Club at Oxford, George Whitefield, and some American pockets of Methodist fellowship retained direct though tenuous links with his wide-ranging evangelism. The individuals who formed the focal points of these pioneer Methodist societies, however, were for the most part local preachers who had emigrated from Britain for personal reasons—men of limited intellectual and administrative gifts, but eager to reproduce in as close a replica as possible the spiritual surroundings which they had regretfully left behind in their home country.

Both in Great Britain and in other countries Methodism has usually propagated itself by means of converted laymen, who from telling others of their own experience of salvation have graduated to preaching from a text, the exhorter thus becoming the preacher. At first these men were "local" preachers, exercising a "spare time" ministry in the area where they lived and worked. From their ranks emerged the specialists, the itinerant preachers—still laymen—who under Wesley's direction served various circuits, itinerating week by week within the circuits, and travelling year by year from one circuit to another, all the time supported financially by the Methodist people. A local preacher whose livelihood (or lack of it) took him to another area or country frequently gathered around himself a group of sympathizers and converts who met regularly for Christian fellowship—a Methodist society. This society the local preacher tried to oversee as best he could, but usually came to realise that this task demanded different talents and much more time than that of evangelical preaching. He thereupon appealed to Wesley or to one of his itiner-

ants to supply the leadership and organization necessary to keep alive the spiritual glow.

This was in effect what happened in the American colonies. After emigrating from England to New York, Thomas Taylor discovered an infant Methodist society which had been raised by Philip Embury (an Irish local preacher)and strengthened by Captain Thomas Webb (an English local preacher). After five months among the New York Methodists, who accepted him sufficiently to make him one of the trustees of the land which they had purchased for building a permanent headquarters, Taylor realised that expert help was highly desirable. On April 11, 1768 he wrote direct to Wesley, asking for guidance in drawing up a trust deed for the proposed preaching house, and making the convincing point that although financial help would not be refused this was not their main need:

> We want an able, experienced preacher; one who has both gifts and graces necessary for the work. God has not despised the day of small things. There is a real work begun in many hearts by the preaching of Mr. Webb and Mr. Embury: but although they are both useful, and their hearts in the work, they want many qualifications necessary for such an undertaking, where they have none to direct them. And the progress of the gospel here depends much on the qualifications of the preachers. . . . We must have a man of wisdom, of sound faith, and a good disciplinarian; one whose heart and soul are in the work.

If such a man could be sent, Taylor continued, "I doubt not but by the goodness of God such a flame would be soon kindled as would never stop until it reached the great South Sea."[1]

Wesley presented the gist of Taylor's letter to his preachers meeting in Conference at Bristol that August, accompanied by a note (probably from Thomas Webb) about "a few people in Maryland who had lately been awakened under the ministry of Robert Strawbridge," and who added their own "pressing call" for help.[2] Wesley left the matter for their consideration until the following Conference. Joseph Pilmoor, for one, was "deeply impressed with a longing desire to visit America."[3] A month or two later, reinforced by the pleas of the Swedish chaplain from Philadelphia, Dr. Wrangel,[4]

1. *Methodist History* III, 3-15 (January, 1965), especially pp, 3, 14.
2. John Atkinson, *The Beginnings of the Wesleyan Movement in America,* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1896), pp. 101, 109.
3. Atkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 108-11; cf. W. W. Sweet, *Men of Zeal* (New York: Abingdon, 1935), p. 89.
4. John Wesley, *Journal,* Standard Edition (London: Epworth Press, 1938), V. 290.

Wesley printed Taylor's appeal as an eight-page pamphlet entitled "A Letter, &c." A copy of this he sent to each of his Assistants—the itinerant preachers in charge of the various circuits—with instructions to read it publicly and to receive subscriptions for the brethren in New York. He continued to drop hints to individual preachers such as Christopher Hopper: "If Joseph Cownley or you have a mind to step over to New York, I will not say you nay. I believe it would help your own health and help many precious souls."[5]

At the Conference which met at Leeds on August 3, 1769, Wesley finally issued the open challenge to which all this had been leading: "We have a pressing call from our brethren at New York (who have built a preaching-house) to come over and help them. Who is willing to go?" Although several, including Pilmoor, had almost certainly resolved to volunteer, they diffidently remained silent. It seems certain that Wesley canvassed for two men rather than the one requested by Taylor, as he also did on subsequent occasions, and looked for two men who could work amicably as senior and junior partner. John Pawson stated that "several of the brethren offered to go if I would go along with them."[6] On the following day the call was repeated.[7] The volunteers were forthcoming, and the Minutes record Wesley's choice: "Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor."[8]

Altogether from 1769 to 1774 Wesley sent over eight of his itinerants in matched pairs, with one each time as the recognized leader. All were young men in their early thirties except for the two chosen in 1771, Francis Asbury and Richard Wright; Asbury was only 26 and Wright apparently younger still. Following them in 1773 were two very experienced men to face increasing problems, Thomas Rankin and George Shadford. In 1774 came two men with lesser experience, James Dempster and Martin Rodda. After the successful Revolution Wesley sent two more, preachers with many more years and experience to their credit than any of their predecessors, and ordained to boot, in order to salvage whatever might remain of Methodist traditions and discipline in the liberated colonies. To a greater or lesser degree each of these ten men helped to impress Wesley's

5. John Wesley, *Letters*, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1931), V:123.

6. *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 6 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), IV:37.

7. Sweet, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

8. *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1862), I:86.

ideas upon American Methodism, though the key period for this process was the first decade, and the key figure the man who remained behind when his loyalist brethren left for England, Francis Asbury.

One important element in American Methodist progress during the 1770's was the struggle for power between the pioneer local preachers and their absent leader, acting through these itinerant preachers dispatched with delegated authority to guide the fortunes of the new societies. Regarded in another way this was a struggle also between a tendency to somewhat formless revivalism and organized churchmanship. It is true that the immigrant local preachers, notably Robert Strawbridge in Maryland, warmed enthusiastically to the growing community of converts looking to them for leadership, and strove to organize them into a self-sufficient church complete with ministry and sacraments. It is also true on the other hand that neither Wesley nor his itinerants despised emotional evangelism. Nevertheless on the issue of revivalism versus church order there existed a clear line of demarcation between the emigrants and Wesley.

Out of the resulting tension, and to some extent arising from it, was forged a vigorous new denomination, tautly disciplined and closely organized, yet at the same time flexible enough to grasp every evangelical opportunity presented by the American frontier. Upon the expanding frontier, therefore, Methodism proved a formidable rival to the Baptists, about whom Asbury made the comment: "Like ghosts they haunt us from place to place."[9]

Before leaving London the first two British itinerants, Boardman and Pilmoor, sought and received additional advice and blessing not only from Charles Wesley but also from that veteran missionary George Whitefield, whom John Wesley had asked to keep an eye on them when he embarked on what proved to be his last visit to America.[10] Both in organizing the societies and in tempering the eager outcroppings of undisciplined emotionalism they were far more successful than was sometimes acknowledged, either by their contemporaries or by some later historians. After a very stormy passage they disembarked at Gloucester Point, New Jersey on October 21, 1769, and were surprised to discover in nearby Philadelphia another Methodist society, which was already receiving the friendly succour of Captain Webb and of Robert Williams. Williams had recently arrived from Ireland, where he had served for three years as an itin-

9. *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, ed. Elmer T. Clark (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958), I:176.

10. Atkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 125-6; Wesley, *Letters*, V:184.

erant preacher in a subsidiary probationary capacity; Wesley had accepted his offer to work in America on a completely voluntary basis on condition that he would subject himself to the authority of the regular itinerants who would soon follow him out.[11]

Boardman, who was the senior by a few months and had served six years as an itinerant (at least four as an Assistant) against Pilmoor's three (none as Assistant), was now Wesley's Assistant in charge of Methodism throughout the American continent—Circuit No. 50 in the British *Minutes* for the following year. After discussion he decided that the two of them must divide forces; leaving his junior colleague to organize the work in Philadelphia he went on to their original destination of New York.

Pilmoor proved himself fully adequate to this first major responsibility. He attended worship at St. Paul's Church and secured the cooperation of the local Anglican clergyman, the Rev. William Stringer; he preached in the open air; he introduced the good British Methodist practice of a preaching service at 5.0 a.m. before people went off to their work; he publicly read and explained Wesley's *Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies*, of which a new edition (making at least nineteen thus far) had just been published. Soon he was introducing prayer meetings and the love feast, visiting the local prisoners (and preaching a charity sermon for them), attempting a preaching itinerary in the rural areas, and helping to secure Old St. George's as a permanent building for the parent society in Philadelphia, and settled upon the type of trust officially recommended by Wesley.[12] Once established in Old St. George's Pilmoor publicly nailed his Methodist colours to the mast, so that his hearers would all know what he as Wesley's agent stood for:

1. That the Methodist society was never designed to make a separation from the Church of England, or to be looked upon as a church.
2. That it was at first and is still intended for the benefit of all those of every denomination who, being truly convinced of sin and the danger they are exposed to, earnestly desire to flee from the wrath to come.
3. That any person who is so convinced, and desires admittance into the society, will readily be received as a *probationer*.
4. That those who walk according to the oracles of God, and thereby

11. W. C. Barclay, *Early American Methodism, 1779-1844* (New York: Board of Missions, 1949), I:29-32; cf. Atkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 130, 141-2, and *Arminian Magazine*, 1784, p. 163; for Williams's visit to Philadelphia in September 1769, see A. W. Cliffe, *The Glory of our Methodist Heritage* (Philadelphia, 1956), pp. 72-3.

12. J. P. Lockwood, *The Western Pioneers* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1881), pp. 83-92; cf. Atkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-160, 166-7, 172-5.

give proof of their sincerity, will readily be admitted into full connection with the Methodists.

5. That if any person or persons in the society walk disorderly and transgress the holy law of God, we will admonish him of his error; we will strive to restore him in the spirit of meekness; we will bear with him for a time; but if he remain incorrigible and impenitent, we must then of necessity inform him that he is no longer a member of the society. . . .[13]

After five months Pilmoor claimed: "In Philadelphia there are now 182 in society to whom I have given tickets, and they meet in class and attend to all the discipline of the Methodists as well as the people in London or Bristol." That same entry was preceded by a prophetic note: "If we had more preachers—men of faith and prayer who would preach Christ Jesus the Lord—'tis probable the American Methodists would soon equal, if not exceed, the Europeans."[14]

Meantime Boardman was tracing a similar path in the New York area, though (one suspects) with not quite the vigour and finesse displayed by Pilmoor, to whom it was left later to introduce the love feast to the New York society and (more important) to straighten out the legal tangles over the new building there.[15] Like Pilmoor, Boardman seems to have made limited preaching itineraries around his headquarters, and to have been genuinely concerned about the rural areas. His first letter to Wesley reported: "There appears such a willingness in the Americans to hear the word as I never saw before. They have no preaching in some parts of the Back Settlements. I doubt not but an effectual door will be opened among them."[16]

Boardman and Pilmoor, however, suffered from the common human failing of not being able to do everything at the same time. To this was apparently added the complication that the man in charge, Boardman, was somewhat less able and forceful than his colleague, and was also living under the shadow of the recent death of his wife and young daughter.[17] Nor was Pilmoor inclined to undermine the

13. Atkinson, *op cit.*, pp. 159-60; this is largely a summary of Wesley's *General Rules.*

14. Lockwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-6. N.B. Robert Williams seems already to have printed class tickets, and issued them to the members in New York; see J. B. Wakeley, *Lost Chapters recovered from the early history of American Methodism* (New York: 1858), pp. 195, 414-5, 424. (Wakeley is in error in describing them as love feast tickets.)

15. Atkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 175, 178-181, and Wakeley, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-206; see also my notes on the legal problems in *Methodist History* III (January, 1965), pp. 12-13.

16. *Arminian Magazine* (1784), p. 164.

17. Lockwood, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

authority of Boardman and take over the reins for himself. In spite of their eagerness to preach the gospel in the "back settlements," New York and Philadelphia clearly constituted key areas upon which initially they must concentrate. Successfully they introduced or reinforced most of the features appropriate to large city societies, and pleaded with Wesley for more trained helpers. Pilmoor wrote on May 5, 1770:

> Brother Boardman and I are chiefly confined to the cities, and therefore cannot at present go much into the country, as we have more work upon our hands than we are able to perform. There is work enough for two preachers in each place, and if two of our brethren would come over I believe it would be attended with a great blessing, for then we could visit the places adjacent to the cities.[18]

There seems little doubt that the appeals for help which reached Wesley from both Boardman and Pilmoor were not only on account of the magnitude of the opportunity but because of the problem of maintaining the traditional Methodist discipline in view of the increasing independence of the local preachers. Embury in New York (until he left for Ashgrove in 1770) and Webb as preacher-at-large and pastor in his own Long Island estate were apparently content with their lot. Williams was more ambitious. He was in any case a little more than a local preacher, though a little less than a regular itinerant; as a tireless evangelist and colporteur he seems to have acted as a free lance, and his not uncommendable activities in publishing Methodist literature were eventually regarded as an overstepping of his powers. Williams had arrived a few weeks before Pilmoor and Boardman. Some months later came John King. He had never served as an itinerant in England, but as a local preacher Wesley regarded him as "stubborn and headstrong," and he gained a reputation for "screaming" while he preached. In view of his lack of credentials Pilmoor allowed him to serve some of the country societies only, and even then with extreme reluctance.[19] In his 1770 *Minutes* Wesley did indeed append the names of both Williams and King to those of Pilmoor and Boardman (in that order) on the American circuit, but they were dropped from the *Minutes* of 1771, almost certainly because of complaints from the regular itinerants.

Yet so overwhelmed did Boardman and Pilmoor find themselves by the problems and opportunities of New York and Philadelphia that they left Webb and Williams and King almost unsupervised.

18. *Arminian Magazine* (1784), p. 224.
19. Wesley, *Letters*, VI:166-7; Lockwood, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

When Pilmoor heard Williams preach a few times in Philadelphia he admired his sincerity, but noted: "His gifts are small, yet he may be useful to the country people, who are in general like sheep without shepherds."[20] Unfortunately Williams was preacher rather than pastor, and the country people largely remained without a shepherd, as did those in the other cities. Williams had preached in Baltimore before Pilmoor, as probably had King, but not until Pilmoor's visit in June 1772 were the *General Rules* expounded and a society organized.[21] Similarly Williams had landed in Norfolk, Virginia, and preached there subsequently, but it was left to Pilmoor to organize the first Methodist societies in Portsmouth and Norfolk in November 1772.[22] Pilmoor's extended journey into the south, however, during which he accomplished such consolidation, was not possible until Wesley had answered the call for reinforcements.

Far more dangerous—at least from the ecclesiastical standpoint of Wesley and his itinerants—was the status of Robert Strawbridge in Maryland. No one is yet absolutely certain just when he arrived from his native Ireland, where he had been one of Wesley's local preachers, but it is almost certain that he had been established as an evangelical leader for several years before Wesley's helpers arrived. He had been very effective in forming societies, building a log meeting house, inspiring his converts themselves to exhort, and had even begun to baptize and (apparently) to administer the Lord's Supper to his followers. Although Boardman may have attempted a preaching foray into Maryland, neither he nor Pilmoor undertook any serious supervision of Strawbridge's work. Pilmoor heard him preach "a plain, useful sermon" during a rare visit to Philadelphia in January 1770.[23] So far, so good. But he returned to be a law unto himself. Success naturally fed his self-confidence if not his self-esteem, and every year of his continued independence made the deferred but inevitable power struggle likely to be the more severe.

Wesley's mail contained not only appeals from Boardman and Pilmoor but complaints about them. Pilmoor had from the outset resisted Boardman's demands that they should change places three or four times a year, visualising himself as what he eventually became, an evangelical parish clergyman with settled headquarters—though

20. Lockwood, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
21. Atkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-343.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 354-62; cf. W. W. Sweet, *Virginia Methodism* (Richmond, Va.: Whittet & Shepperson, 1955), pp. 53-7.
23. Atkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

in his zeal to "do good in the itinerant way" he did indeed refuse the possibility of ordination and a living in the West Indies.[24] Under the warmth of American generosity, both in praise and in money, even Boardman came to share Pilmoor's desire to spend most of his time as the pastor of a large society, with occasional preaching excursions into the country.

For whatever reason, help was clearly needed in America. On several occasions Wesley seriously pondered coming over himself. At any rate in 1771 he released two more men from his stations, out of the five who volunteered. They were both young men, apparently better designed to supplement than to supplant the labours of their predecessors. Richard Wright, who had been admitted on trial only the previous year, and even then not given a regular station, proved a broken reed, though during the two and a half years that he remained he did a little good. His head, also, seems to have been turned by American generosity and flattery.[25] The senior of the pair, Francis Asbury, was only 26 years old, and had had only four years' experience in country circuits, even then not as an Assistant. The choice did not seem unduly promising.

Asbury, nevertheless, whether so commissioned by Wesley or not, believed himself capable of doing a better job than his two seniors, and was prepared to shake things up, cost what it might. Less than a week after joining Boardman in New York his *Journal* noted:

> I remain in New York, though unsatisfied with our being both in town together. I have not yet the thing which I seek—a circulation of preachers, to avoid partiality and popularity. However, I am fixed to the Methodist plan, and do what I do faithfully, as to God. I expect trouble is at hand. This I expected when I left England.[26]

Two days later came a similar complaint:

> I judge we are to be shut up in the cities this winter. My brethren seem unwilling to leave the cities, but I think I shall show them the way. I am in trouble, and more trouble is at hand, for I am determined to make a stand against all partiality. . . . I am come over with an upright intention, and through the grace of God I will make it appear: and I am determined that no man shall bias me with soft words and fair speeches. . . .[27]

The following spring Asbury's mind was somewhat eased by Boardman's plan that the two younger men should take over New

24. Lockwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 125, 199-211; cf. Wakeley, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-8.
25. Asbury, *Journal*, I:37, 116.
26. *Ibid.*, I:10.
27. *Ibid.*, cf. p. 16.

York and Philadelphia for three months, while Boardman himself visited the Boston area and Pilmoor toured Virginia.[28] He was greatly disturbed, however, when he reached Philadelphia for the first time since his arrival there four months earlier, to find society discipline (as he thought) unduly relaxed, especially in the matter of strangers being given unlimited access to the private gatherings of the society. He found the same kind of thing when he took a tour of duty in New York, and put forward an agenda of sixteen points "for the better ordering of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the society." In this tightening of discipline he was supported by a letter from Wesley, and much strengthened on October 10 by a further letter appointing him Assistant in place of Boardman.[29] Already he had heard a whisper which seemed to imply that his senior colleagues were being recalled to England, and he had clearly added his own to other complaints about them.[30] Boardman took the news of Asbury's promotion over him with good grace, but Pilmoor felt that he had been betrayed, and was furious.[31]

As a matter of fact Asbury's added responsibility was for a short time only, and he must surely have known it. At the Leeds Conference in August 1772 Thomas Webb had stirred the assembly with an appeal for more preachers for America, and there appears to have been no lack of volunteers. For almost two years Wesley had been pleading with Thomas Rankin, one of his most experienced men, to help straighten the tangled American skein. Webb's appeal was just sufficient to tip the scales in America's favour, even though Rankin was wise enough to make allowances for Webb's "lively imagination."[32] Rankin, a man of 35 who had been an itinerant preacher for eleven years, at least seven of them as an Assistant, had even spent the year 1770-71 on the London circuit—when Wesley earmarked him for America. He chose as his companion George Shadford, who was a year younger, had begun his ministry as Rankin's junior colleague in Cornwall, and had now itinerated for four years, the latter two as Assistant.

It was arranged that the two men should each take charge of an English circuit until the spring, when they would leave for America with Webb. They sailed on Good Friday, April 9, 1773, accom-

28. See Wakeley, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-4, for notes on Boardman's introduction of Methodism into New England ahead of Jesse Lee.

29. *Journal*, I:41, 46; both letters have disappeared.

30. *Ibid.*, I:39, 41, 45.

31. *Ibid.*, I:48, 57.

32. *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, V:183-4.

panied by Webb's new bride and another English local preacher, Joseph Yerbury—his name is spelt in several different ways. Webb had persuaded Yerbury to try his hand at the American itinerancy, but the young man found that he was not cut out for the task and returned to England with Richard Wright.[33] The party arrived in Philadelphia on June 1, 1773.

Rankin, of course, being appointed "General Assistant" by Wesley, immediately took over responsibility from Asbury, and Asbury seems to have been genuinely happy to give place to such an obviously experienced disciplinarian.[34] Even Pilmoor and Boardman seemed to turn over a new leaf, though by December both had determined to return to England.[35] Although somewhat austere and even domineering in character, contrasting greatly with Shadford's warmth and spiritual informality, on the whole Rankin merited Asbury's gratitude. Asbury was cautious, however. In such a pioneering situation it was still frequently necessary for him to make his own working decisions, but he was very careful to add the proviso—"unless Mr. Rankin has given orders to the contrary."[36] As General Assistant Rankin in effect exercised an episcopal role, stationing the other preachers in their circuits, but limiting himself to none.[37]

Within six weeks of his arrival Thomas Rankin had summoned the preachers to America's first General Conference, designed to set the tone for a more tightly organized connection. By this the authority of Wesley and the British Conference was explicitly extended to America, and their doctrine and discipline as contained in their *Minutes* was accepted as the American norm. Any preachers who proved disloyal to the *Minutes* were no longer to be regarded as in connection with Wesley. Wesley's writings were only to be reprinted with his consent or that of his authorized itinerant representatives; Williams, who had erred at this point, was warned that he might sell what he had, but must reprint no more. No preacher was to administer the sacraments. The printed rule on this point was inflexible, but Asbury's manuscript account shows that an exception

33. *Ibid.*, V:185, and Rankin's MS diary (at Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois), for 5 June, 1774.

34. Asbury, *Journal*, I:82.

35. Rankin, MS diary for August 29, December 2, 1773.

36. Asbury, *Journal* III:19.

37. *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, held annually in America, from 1773 to 1794, inclusive* (Philadelphia: Tuckniss, 1795), pp. 14-15; see also the much fuller MS minutes kept by Philip Gatch, copied from the *Western Christian Advocate* of May 19 and 26, 1837 by the Baltimore Conference Methodist Historical Society (1964), pp. 2-3; cf. Asbury, *Journal* I:246.

was made in the case of Strawbridge, who had been doing it for years, a practice winked at by Boardman and Pilmoor, so that even Asbury had felt "obliged to connive . . . for the sake of peace."[38] Strawbridge, however, was only to administer "under the particular direction of the Assistant." To Asbury was allotted the task of bringing Strawbridge to good old-fashioned Methodist wisdom. At the Maryland Quarterly Meeting on August 2, Asbury reports:

> I read a part of our minutes, to see if brother Strawbridge would conform; but he appeared to be inflexible. He would not administer the ordinances under our direction at all. Many things were said on the subject; and a few of the people took part with him.

A firm beginning had at last been made, however, and at least Strawbridge now knew that in Wesley's eyes he was clearly a renegade, only able to continue in defiance at the cost of a schism, which in a few years almost took place.

The names of Williams and King (as mentioned above) had been dropped from the British *Minutes* in 1771, clearly because these two were by Wesley regarded simply as local preachers assisting the regular itinerants. Nor were their names reinstated until 1773—there had just been time for an assurance to reach England that these two, at any rate, were prepared to toe the connectional line. The name of Strawbridge never appeared in the British *Minutes*, and in 1774 was dropped from the American *Minutes* after appearing in 1773, and dropped surely as an implied threat to his precarious status. In 1775 he was once more stationed, but then dropped completely. The reason is clearly illustrated in Asbury's *Journal* for August 27, 1775, describing a Virginia Quarterly Meeting: "Mr. Strawbridge discovered his independent principles, in objecting to our discipline. He appears to want no preachers: he can do as well or better than they." For better or worse the government of the Methodist societies *as a connection* was to remain firmly under the control of Wesley's official itinerant preachers and those who were loyal to them.

By the time of that first American Conference there had begun a trickle of British and native local preachers who were regarded as barely acceptable for the full-time itinerancy. In the 1773 *Minutes* ten preachers were stationed in six circuits. Of these men four were British itinerants—Rankin, Shadford, Asbury, and Wright. Five were British immigrants, all apparently formerly local preachers—King, Strawbridge, Yerbury, Williams, and Abraham Whitworth.

38. *Minutes*, 1773, pp. 5-6; Asbury, *Journal*, I:60, 85.

One only was a native American—William Watters, a promising young man of twenty-one, a product of Baltimore County, Maryland, though brought into the ministry by Williams rather than by Strawbridge.[39] Within a few years the four British-trained itinerants were to be reduced to one, and the American-raised to be greatly multiplied. By the standards of their most competent leaders, Rankin and Asbury, the latter were not too promising.

After an extended journey into the south in 1772 Pilmoor had noted—and if Rankin and Asbury ever read these words they would have said, "Amen!":

> God has undoubtedly begun a good work in these parts by the ministry of Messrs. John King, and Robert Williams, and Robert Strawbridge, but there is much danger from those who follow a heated imagination rather than the pure illumination of the Spirit and the direction of the Word of God. Wherever I go I find it necessary to bear testimony against all wildness, shouting, and confusion in the worship of God, and at the same time to feed and preserve the sacred fire which is certainly kindled in many hearts in this country.[40]

Eight years later a sympathetic evangelical clergyman confessed his fears to the great friend of the Methodists, the Rev. Devereux Jarratt of Bath parish, Dinwiddie County, Virginia: "The Methodists . . . countenance so many illiterate creatures void of all prudence and discretion that I have no expectation of any good and lasting effects from their misguided zeal." Jarratt's reply showed that he was in general agreement, though he pointed out: "Surely [Wesley's] preachers from Europe are not such lame hands as those among us."[41] Asbury himself frequently marvelled how such poor tools could be so greatly used: "The Lord hath done great things for these people, notwithstanding the weakness of the instruments, and some little irregularities."[42] In 1773 he pointed out to his parents in England that being stationed in Maryland he was "in the greatest part of the work," where they had "many country-born preachers and exhorters."[43] They exercised him greatly. On 25 August that year he licensed two exhorters; on the 28th he met Philip Ebert, who had begun to itinerate, but of whose fitness Asbury doubted; on the 29th

39. *A Short Account of . . . William Watters. Drawn up by himself* (Alexandria, 1806), pp. 18-30.

40. Quoted from his journal for Nov. 16, 1772 in W. W. Sweet, *Men of Zeal*, p. 103.

41. Asbury, *Journal* III:24-5.

42. *Ibid.*, I:50.

43. *Ibid.*, III:18.

Daniel Ruff broached the subject of his own call to the ministry while he and Asbury slept in the same bed, which shook under them because of his agitation; on September 1 Asbury lamented:

> I was in company with Brother Whitworth [who was expelled the following year] and Brother Strawbridge, . . . but was much distressed on account of so few preachers well qualified for the work, and so many who are forward to preach without due qualifications.[44]

Small wonder that there was erosion in the ranks of the American Methodist itinerancy. It is impossible to secure adequate information about many of the preachers, not even the date and place of their birth, or whether they were immigrants or American-born. Between 1773 and 1778, however, the American *Minutes* record the names of over sixty men, quite apart from the British itinerants. Of these only 28 remained in 1778—including ten admitted on trial that very year! A few were very young, like William Duke, who was accepted into the itinerancy when he was sixteen. Many of these left to get married, or the better to support a wife and family. In some instances a lack of aptitude was clearly demonstrated; others became "worn out," still others simply weary. One of the technical terms contributed by American Methodism was applied to the men thus lost to the itinerancy—they "located." Some of them became men of substance whose homes were thrown open as preaching centres, such as Colonel John Beck; others helped to raise important churches, as did William Moore, one of the founders of Lovely Lane Chapel, Baltimore. Upon the tough and courageous residue was soon to descend the destiny of staffing and steering a new denomination, fortunately under the supervising eye of Francis Asbury.

Rankin's second American Conference, held in May 1774, continued the work begun in the first. His journal recorded: "We proceeded in all things on the same plan as in England, which our Minutes will declare."[45] Travelling south from the Conference, he noted:

> I met all the societies as I rode along, and found many truly alive to God. Nevertheless, I saw the necessity of enforcing our discipline strongly wherever I came. I found a degree of slackness in this respect in almost every society. I am more and more convinced that unless the whole plan of our discipline is closely attended to we can never see that work, nor the fruit of our labours, as we would desire.[46]

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44. *Ibid.*, I:91-2.
45. *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, V:200.
46. MS Journal, July 29, 1774.

The British Conference that year sent replacements for Pilmoor and Boardman, who had returned in January—James Dempster, an itinerant of ten years' standing, eight of them as an Assistant, and Martin Rodda, who had been an itinerant intermittently for seven years, the last as Dempster's colleague in Cornwall.

The new men came at a difficult period. Such was the anti-British atmosphere that within a year Rankin wrote telling Asbury that both Rodda and Dempster were returning to England, and he with them. In his reply Asbury apparently stated his opinion that to desert the Americans would be "an eternal dishonour to the Methodists," and shamed them into remaining for at least the time being.[47] For the time being they all stayed, and worked faithfully, and seemed to be giving special attention to training the American preachers who would soon be taking over the reins.[48] The declared policy of the British preachers was to remain neutral in political matters, and some of them were avowed pacifists. Yet their sympathies were naturally with the mother country. Martin Rodda apparently seems to have given them a bad reputation by injudicious loyalist propaganda, but in his favour it should be noted that he shared with Rankin the credit for bringing Freeborn Garrettson into the American ministry.[49]

In 1776 James Dempster left the itinerant work, though for a time he seems to have served the Methodist cause in beleaguered New York.[50] In September 1777 Rankin and Rodda left en route to England, though in fact they were not able to sail until the following spring. In March 1778 Shadford also gave up the work, leaving Asbury, in spite of attempted persuasion and admitted nostalgia, alone.[51]

In view of this eventuality there had been tearful farewells, allied with careful preparations, at the Conference of 1777, which had been preceded by a preparatory caucus. Question 11 (not reproduced in

47. Asbury, *Journal* I:161, 163.

48. Asbury at least was concerned about this. On an earlier occasion he had chided Williams for what he felt was faulty doctrine, and it seems fairly certain that he similarly passed on his opinions about their preaching technique to other rising preachers such as Samuel Spragg, who spoiled a good sermon with "a few pompous, swelling words," and Richard Webster, whose language contained "some little inaccuracies." (See his *Journal* I:97, 188, 195-6.)

49. *The Experience and Travels of Mr. Freeborn Garrettson* (Philadelphia: Hall, 1791), pp. 44-7, 82. See also below, pp. 176-7.

50. Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

51. Asbury, *Journal* I:228, 234-5, 243, 249, 263-9.

the printed *Minutes*) was one of the most significant in its acknowledgment of the past and its looking towards the future:

> Q. 11. Can anything be done in order to lay a foundation for a future union, supposing the old preachers should be, by the times, constrained to return to Great Britain? Would it not be well for all who are willing to sign some articles of agreement, and strictly adhere to the same till other preachers are sent by Mr. Wesley and the brethren in conference?

The twenty preachers present resolved: "We will do it." Their document (to which in fact 25 signatures were appended) was almost word for word a copy of that signed by the preachers in the British Conference in 1769, 1773, 1774, and 1775, pledging allegiance to their evangelical task and to the doctrines and discipline of Methodism as set forth in the *Minutes*.[52] The American version went on to add a fourth point: "To choose a committee of Assistants to transact the business that is now done by the General Assistant and the old preachers who came from Britain." The committee consisted of three native Americans—Daniel Ruff, William Watters, and Philip Gatch—together with two British immigrants who had fully thrown in their lot with America—Edward Drumgoole and William Glendenning.[53] Whatever the duration or the fortunes of the war, the preachers in conference were convinced that British Methodism must remain their model, and that if at all possible they must remain under Wesley's wing. The deep emotions of the leavetaking were undoubtedly caused not merely by sentimental attachments but by a catastrophic sense of the loss of spiritual guidance entailed by the break. Asbury's *Journal* noted:

> When the time of parting came, many wept as if they had lost their first-born sons. They appeared to be in the deepest distress, thinking, as I suppose, they should not see the faces of the English preachers any more. This was such a parting as I never saw before.[54]

Perhaps we should view the occasion also through the eyes of one of those same native preachers, William Watters:

> I never saw so affecting a scene at the parting of the preachers before. Our hearts were knit together as the hearts of David and Jonathan, and we were obliged to use great violence to our feelings in tearing ourselves asunder. This was the last time I ever saw my very worthy friends and fathers, Rankin and Shadford.[55]

52. *Minutes* (1862), I:88, 110, 116, 121.
53. MS Minutes of Philip Gatch (see Note 37); cf. Watters, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7.
54. *Journal* I:239.
55. Watters, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

The last two years had seen an even greater swing to the south in the expansion of Methodism. During 1775-76 a wildfire revival had spread through much of Virginia, spilling over into North Carolina, so that by this time two-thirds of the American Methodists lived within the orbit of the evangelical Episcopalian, the Rev. Devereux Jarratt. Jarratt had co-operated heartily with Robert Williams and his colleagues because he was assured that like their founder they "were true members of the Church of England," whose "design was to build up and not to divide the church." George Shadford sponsored a petition to the General Convention at Williamsburg to dissociate the Methodists from the Baptists, pointing out that they were "not Dissenters, but a Religious Society in communion with the Church of England." Like many of Wesley's Anglican colleagues, Jarratt even agreed to attend the deliberations of the Methodists' conference. Williams himself died before the revival reached its climax, but his task was eagerly taken up by Shadford, and (somewhat less eagerly) by Rankin.[56]

The Virginia revival added to the dimensions of Methodist opportunity, but also of the difficulty, especially as the Episcopalian clergy, who were theoretically needed to administer the sacraments to Methodists, were in increasingly short supply—or in increasingly hotter water with liberty-minded Americans. After lengthy discussion of the problem the members of the 1777 Conference unanimously agreed not themselves to begin administering, but "to lay it over for the determination of the next Conference."[57] When that Conference came round Asbury had prudently but sadly gone into semi-retirement in Delaware until his way should open up for a fuller itinerancy —though at least he had remained in America, to do what little he could. Upon the committee, therefore, was thrown the responsibility of guiding affairs at the Leesburg Conference. Watters reports:

> Having no old preachers with us, we were as orphans bereft of our spiritual parents, and though young and unexperienced to transact the business of conference, yet the Lord looked graciously upon us, and had the uppermost seats in all our hearts, and of course in our meeting.
>
> As the consideration of our administering the ordinances [was] at the last conference laid over till this, it of course came on and found many advocates. It was with considerable difficulty that a large majority

56. Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists* (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), pp. 51-9; cf. Sweet, *Virginia Methodism*, pp. 76-7, and Asbury, *Journal* I:178.

57. Watters, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

was prevailed on to lay it over again, till the next conference, hoping that we should by then be able to see our way more clear in so important a change.[58]

For the 1779 Conference a preparatory meeting was held at Judge Thomas White's in Delaware, mainly for the convenience of Asbury, whose headquarters this was. William Watters came in the hope of persuading Asbury to attend the regular Conference planned to meet in Fluvanna, Virginia, but without success. Asbury and those of the northern circuits felt it unwise to court danger to their cause by going into Virginia, and Watters was deputed to carry their greetings and opinions. When the more numerous southern brethren met at the appointed time they were inclined to regard this preliminary gathering as a conspiracy to defeat their position on the sacramental issue, and accordingly refused to endorse the northern proposition that in succession to Rankin Asbury should be regarded as "General Assistant in America." Claiming that "the Episcopal Establishment is now dissolved, and therefore in almost all our circuits the members are without the ordinances," they appointed a presbytery of three preachers to ordain themselves and the others in order that they might duly administer the sacraments. Interestingly enough, this same group which thus made a daring ecclesiastical innovation was extremely conservative in other ways, reinforcing the authority of the Assistant in each circuit, and insisting that the local preachers and exhorters should not get out of line. That lesson at least they had well learned from the British itinerants, and the ordination proposals were considered as carefully and prayerfully as even John Wesley could have wished—though he could hardly have agreed with the conclusions reached.[59]

Watters' chief reason for attending both conferences was his fear that if steps were taken to administer the sacraments "an entire division" might result.[60] Others also were anxious to prevent this. In 1780 the northern preachers again held a separate Conference, which on this occasion was attended not only by Watters but by two of the ordaining presbytery of the south, Philip Gatch and Reuben Ellis. Asbury and his colleagues were adamant that only the complete cessation of administration of the sacraments could prevent a schism between the northern and southern Methodists. Asbury, Garrettson, and Watters were asked to attend the southern Conference

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-9.
59. Gatch's MS Minutes, pp. 9-11; cf. Watters, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-4.
60. Watters, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-2.

to present this point of view. The ultimatum in fact seemed to harden the issue. And then suddenly the matter was resolved by Asbury's suggestion that his brethren should simply suspend administration for one year. This first delay led to others, and matters stood in pretty much the same shape when the war ended in 1783. Asbury and others urged upon Wesley that it was now up to him to help them out of their dilemma.

It was at this stage, after a decade's enforced delay, that Wesley sent over his last pair of itinerants, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey. Each was older than any of his predecessors. Vasey had been born in the same year as Asbury, and was now nearing forty, having been an itinerant for nine years. Whatcoat was forty-eight, and had been an itinerant for sixteen years, and frequently an Assistant. He was regarded by Wesley as an admirable successor to Asbury as General Assistant, and eventually like him was in fact elevated to the American Methodist episcopacy. These men were the first exemplars of the precious gift of Holy Orders so long impatiently awaited by American Methodism, and they assisted Thomas Coke in ordaining Asbury. Through these years of waiting, however, Asbury had grown steadily in stature among his American colleagues, as they had in his eyes (helped partly by the training which he strove to furnish), so that when the time came he refused vicarious ordination from Wesley's hands alone, but sought and received the mandate of the American itinerants. Thus was born a church which had been strangely preserved to make the best of two worlds, the old and the new, the episcopal and the presbyterian, of ordered worship and revival meeting, of city and frontier.

In a sense, however, Asbury's ordination and the official setting up of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784 were only the icing on the cake. The main task had been accomplished by those eight pioneer preachers rather than by their two belated successors. It is true, as William Warren Sweet has pointed out, that the departure of the British itinerants to leave the work in the hands of native preachers can hardly be regretted; it was one of the better by-products of the sad conflict between a repressive mother country and a vigorous, virile, colony. It is doubtful, however, whether their return should be described as an "unmixed blessing."[61] It was certainly not so regarded by the native preachers themselves. Another important point must be made. Although American Methodism had not been

61. W. W. Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840. Vol. IV. The Methodists* (University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 36.

unduly hurt by the withdrawal of the British preachers, especially as they regretfully left Asbury behind, it would have been immeasurably hurt had they never come. They came with a purpose; they fulfilled that purpose, and they left, albeit sooner than either Wesley or they had intended, and under far different circumstances than any of them could have wished.

They had fulfilled their purpose. This first decade constituted the period of securing church order for the Methodist societies in America, the second that of securing Holy Orders. Had the American Methodists been without the oversight of Wesley's delegates in either quest Methodism would not have developed along the same lines that it did, and one suspects that it might have evaporated into a formless and dwindling revivalist sect. Not that the actual Methodist discipline in all its details so earnestly inculcated by Boardman and Pilmoor and their later colleagues was all that important in itself. A living organism needs periodically to discard its tissue that it may be renewed, needs also to adapt itself to a different environment. Many of the prominent features of early Methodism, both in Britain and America, have become outmoded, notably the early morning services, the love feasts, the class tickets (at least in America), and even the class meeting itself. The chief value of the work and witness of the early British itinerants was that they helped to ensure that the scattered American Methodist societies did indeed learn to function as part of a living organism, a connectional unity, instead of developing at random. The Methodist Episcopal Church, for all its seeming dissociation from Wesley's British Methodist societies, was in fact their vigorous extension into a new area and a new era, and owed a great debt to those agents of his who struggled against prejudice and persecution to help set it on its feet.

The Early Native Methodist Preachers

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"I was the first American who had gone out amongst the Methodists to preach the Gospel," wrote William Watters,[1] whose claim to be the first native American Methodist itinerant has been traditionally acknowledged.[2] Born in Baltimore County, Maryland, on October 16, 1751, to Godfrey and Sarah Watters, William was among that distinguished band of young preachers produced by the preaching of Robert Strawbridge and Robert Williams. Although his parents were members of the Church of England and his father a vestryman, young Watters complained that the only two ministers he knew "were both immoral men, and had no gifts for the ministry." In contrast, the Methodists "lived in a manner I never had known any to live before." In his autobiography Watters gave a detailed account of the "memorable change [which] took place in May, 1771, in the twentieth year of my age," a "change from darkness to light, from death to life," so that he then "enjoyed experimental religion in its native life and power."[3] Illustrating the vital contribution of lay witness to the Methodist revival, Watters wrote:

> In one sense we were all preachers; . . . On the Lord's Day we commonly divided into little bands, and went out into different neighbourhoods, wherever there was a door open to receive us; two, three, or four in company, and would sing our hymns, pray, read, talk to the people, and some soon began to add a word of exhortation. . . . The little flock was of one heart and mind, and the Lord spread the leaven of his grace from heart to heart, from house to house, and from one neighbourhood to an-

1. *A Short Account of the Christian Experience and Ministerial Labours of William Watters* (Alexandria: S. Snowden, 1806), p. 33. Hereafter cited as Watters, *Short Account.*

2. Cf., Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America; etc.* (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), p. 45; Abel Stevens, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1884), I, 175; and Emory S. Bucke, Editor, *The History of American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), I, 139. Hereafter cited as Lee, *Short History*; Stevens, *History*; and HAM, I.

3. Watters, *Short Account*, pp. 1, 3, 16, 17.

other. . . . it was astonishing to see how rapidly the work spread all around.[4]

In less than nine months Watters' seven brothers and two sisters "all professed to know the Lord."[5] In the Fall of 1771, when one of the earliest Methodist chapels in Maryland was built on his brother Henry's farm,[6] William was appointed class leader.

Our meetings, both private and public, became lively and well attended to, and one and another were daily obtaining the blessing, and for several weeks I could do little more than attend to our meetings and the families that were setting out for the kingdom.[7]

Of particular interest to this study of the early Methodist ministry is Watters's account of his increasing sense of call to the itinerancy.

From my first finding peace with God I found my mind much affected with a sense of the danger poor sinners were in, and my heart drawn out with fervent desires and prayer for their salvation, and from time to time have thought that nothing was so near or dear but what I would willingly part with to be an instrument of spreading the glorious gospel through the earth, but did not think it possible that I should ever be able to contribute any thing towards this desirable end in a public way; but finding that God had indisputably owned and blest my feeble endeavours in the conversion of several in different neighbourhoods and houses, . . . and above all felt a continual conviction on my mind that this was the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning me. . . . It was my deliberate opinion that if I ever was a preacher I must be one of the Lord's own making, as my natural and acquired abilities forbid any thoughts of the kind. . . . I began with fear and trembling once in a while to give a few words of exhortation, but frequently was afraid of running before I was sent, . . . Yet the divine comfort I found in speaking to and inviting precious souls to seek the Lord! . . . Yet the word of the Lord would be as fire in my bones, and I dare not refrain from declaring his loving kindness to my fellow sinners.[8]

Whatever hesitation remained was overcome in October of 1772 when Watters "cheerfully accepted the invitation of that pious ser-

4. Watters, *Short Account*, pp. 18-19. Cf., Frederick A. Norwood, "The Americanization of the Wesleyan Itinerant," *The Ministry in the Methodist Heritage*, ed. Gerald O. McCulloh (Nashville: Board of Education of The Methodist Church, 1960), pp. 35-47.

5. Watters, *Short Account*, p. 21.

6. Wm. B. Sprague, Editor, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1865), VII "The Methodists," 49; and *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, ed. Elmer T. Clark (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), I, 50-51. Hereafter cited as Sprague, Annals; and Asbury, *Journal and Letters*.

7. Watters, *Short Account*, pp. 20-21.

8. Watters, *Short Account*, pp. 21-23.

vant of the Lord, Robert Williams," to accompany him on a preaching tour in Virginia, "and set out with him and under his care . . . being just twenty-one years of age, having known the Lord seventeen months, and been exhorting about five or six."[9] In Virginia, the young preacher was also closely associated with Joseph Pilmoor and began a long friendship with Devereux Jarratt.[10]

In July, 1773, Watters was appointed by the first Methodist Conference in America to the "Kent circuit on the Eastern shore of Maryland."[11] Watters apparently did not attend this conference, for he dates his first meeting with Rankin and Asbury in September or October of 1773.[12] Of Francis Asbury he wrote: "We rode afterwards in company for some miles. He made particular enquiry about the parts I had been in, as well as the preachers who had preceded and succeeded me there."[13] And having heard Rankin preach, he said:

I was much pleased with him. He continued to shew me every mark of his particular esteem to the end of his stay in America. I always thought him qualified to fill his place as general assistant amongst us, notwithstanding his particularities. He was not only a man of grace, but of strong and quick parts.[14]

Watters described his next appointment in 1774 bluntly: "My friends wishing me in Baltimore circuit, where I should be amongst them, were indulged."[15] Those were critical days for colonial America.

The dreadful cloud that had been hanging over us continued to gather thicker and thicker, . . . I was in Trenton when Hancock and Adams passed through on their way to the First Congress, in Philadelphia. They

9. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-34, 58. In 1792 Jarratt suggested that Watters receive episcopal ordination in the interest of reviving the declining fortunes of that church. W. W. Sweet, *Virginia Methodism: A History* (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1955), pp. 115-116.

11. Watters, *Short Account*, pp. 30, 35-36. Actually it was November before he arrived at his appointment, being delayed first by his commitment to Williams in Virginia and later by illness. According to the *Minutes*, Watters and John King were appointed to New Jersey. *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, Annually Held in America, From 1773 to 1813, Inclusive* (New York: Daniel Hitt and Thomas Ware, 1813), p. 6.

12. Watters, *Short Account*, pp. 34-35. Could Watters' "good friend G. P---y" be George Prestbury in Asbury, *Journal and Letters*, I (Sept. 7, 1773), p. 93?

13. Watters, *Short Account*, p. 35.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

were received with great pomp, and were much caressed by the inhabitants of the Town.[16]

But "wars and rumours of wars all around us" did not hinder the spread of the Methodist revival. Appointed to the Frederick circuit in Maryland in May, 1775, Watters reported:

In July we were blessed with a gracious revival in the lower part of the circuit, which spread all around and continued increasing to the end of my stay. . . . I often preached, prayed and exhorted till I was so exhausted that I have been scarcely able to stand.[17]

After six months Rankin sent Watters to Fairfax circuit, where "In less than a quarter, we had the greatest revival I had ever seen in any place. . . . We had several very astonishing instances of the mighty power of God, . . . in five or six months were added to the society 'upwards of one hundred souls.' "[18] By 1778 Watters noted that the war "often checked the vital flame," even in Fairfax circuit, which had suffered little.

Yet it is not more astonishing than true, that the work continued to spread, in all those parts where we had preachers to labour, and I doubt whether, at any time before or since, the work has been more genuine amongst us, than it was through the war.[19]

One effect of the war, of course, was the threat to the English missionaries sent over by Wesley. This was a major concern faced by the conference that met at Henry Watters' preaching house at Deer Creek in May, 1777.

There appearing no probability of the contests ending shortly, between this country and Great Britain, several of our European preachers, thought if an opportunity should offer, they would return to their relations and homes in the course of the year; and to provide against such an event, five of us, Gatch, Dromgoold, Ruff, Glendining and myself, were appointed as a committee, to act in the place of the general Assistant, in case they should all go before next conference.[20]

16. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57. Both Barclay and Arthur Moss state that Watters was chairman of this committee, but unfortunately neither gives supporting reference. Barclay, I, 57; HAM, I, 140. There is no such indication in Watters' account or in the records of Asbury, Garrettson, or Gatch.

The only clear evidence of any activity on the part of this committee is that of Watters' presiding at the next conference at Leesburg, Virginia, May, 1778. As Nathan Bangs explained the situation:

Mr. Asbury not being present on account of ill health, and Mr. Rankin and his British brethren having departed for England, Mr. William Watters, being the oldest American preacher, was called upon to preside.[21]

Watters also played a significant part in healing the schism over the sacraments. In both 1777 and 1778 the question was debated whether with so few ordained ministers left in America the American preachers should administer the sacraments. These two conferences only postponed the problem, and Watters approached the conference in 1779 in deep consternation.

From my particular knowledge of all the preachers, I foresaw what would be the consequences of the subject of the ordinances which had been so warmly debated the two preceding conferences, and which I was fully satisfied a number of them were determined to adopt at the ensuing conference, though it were at the expence of an entire division. My great concern was not whether we should or should not adopt them; but on account of the division that I was satisfied would take place at their being adopted. I could freely and without hesitation have agreed either way to have prevented what I considered one of the greatest evils that could befall us. . . . I finally came to a determination to endeavour by every means in my power to prevent a division: or if that could not be done, to stand in the gap as long as possible.[22]

Accidentally hearing of a conference to be held by Asbury and the preachers east of the Potomac a few weeks before the annual conference, Watters planned to go despite his weakness from illness. He hoped to persuade Asbury to attend "the regularly appointed conference" to be held in Fluvanna County, Virginia, but it was still considered unsafe for Asbury to leave the area where he was well known.[23]

All I could obtain, was the opinion and determination of this little conference, on the matter in debate, and a few letters from Mr. Asbury to several of the oldest preachers. I was the only preacher in connection who attended both Conferences. I felt a heavy heart at both, and could not but wonder at seeing some of the best men that I ever knew so little concerned, to appearance, at what to me was one of the greatest matters

21. Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Mason and Lane, 1840), I, 129.

22. Watters, *Short Account*, pp. 72-73.

23. Watters, *Short Account*, pp. 72-73. All Englishmen were suspected to be Tories.

in the world. Several of the southern preachers complained that there had been an illegal conference held to keep as many of the northern preachers from conference as possible, lest they should join with them in adopting the ordinances. After much loving talk on the subject all but a few determined on appointing a committee to ordain each other, and then all the rest. The few who did not agree to what was done, who were not confined by families, came in company with me, and took their stations more to the north.[24]

When the northern preachers held their conference in April the following year (1780), "two of our brethren from below, Gatch and R. Ellis who had adopted the administering ordinances, attended to see if any thing could be done to prevent a total dis-union, for they did not wish that to be the case. They both thought their brethren were hard with them, and complained that I was the only one who did not join them that treated them with affection and tenderness."[25] The conference denounced "the step taken by our brethren in Virginia," declaring: "We look upon them no longer as Methodists in connexion with Mr. Wesley and us till they come back." The condition for union was that they "suspend all their administrations for one year, and all meet together in Baltimore." Asbury, Garrettson and Watters were instructed "to attend the Virginia conference, and inform them of our proceedings in this, and receive their answer."[26] Watters was sceptical: "I awfully feared our visit would be of little consequence; yet I willingly went down in the name of God—Hoping against hope."[27]

We found our brethren as loving and as full of zeal as ever, and as fully determined on persevering in their newly adopted mode; for to all their former arguments, they now added (what with many was infinitely stronger than all the arguments in the world) that the Lord approbated, and greatly blessed his own ordinances, by them administered the past year. We had a great deal of loving conversation with many tears; but I saw no bitterness, no shyness, no judging one another. We wept, and prayed, and sobbed, but neither would agree to the other's terms.[28]

After two days of unsuccessful negotiations Watters and his colleagues decided to leave early the next morning.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 73. The most complete account of this entire matter is found in Leroy M. Lee, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Jesse Lee* (Charleston, S. C.: John Early, 1848), pp. 72-87. Cf., HAM, I, pp. 176-180, 189-95.
25. Watters, *Short Account*, p. 79.
26. *Minutes*, I, p. 26.
27. Watters, *Short Account*, p. 80.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

But late in the evening it was proposed by one of their own party in conference (none of the others being present), that there should be a suspension of the ordinances for the present year, and that our circumstances should be laid before Mr. Wesley and his advice solicited in the business, also that Mr. Asbury should be requested to ride through the different circuits and superintend the work at large. The proposal in a few minutes took with all but a few. In the morning instead of coming off in despair of any remedy, we were invited to take our seats again in conference, where with great rejoicings and praises to God, we on both sides heartily agreed to the above accommodation. I could not but say it is of the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.[29]

This appeal to John Wesley must have been as influential as any other in bringing about his decision to ordain ministers for America once the peace treaty was signed.[30]

Although Watters married Sarah Adams on June 6, 1778, he continued to travel until December, 1783, when he located because of ill health. He moved to his farm near Washington, where he continued to assist the preachers nearby. He shared in "two or three considerable revivals of religion," and at times "rode as much in the Circuit as the preacher who was appointed to it."[31] Except for a brief period in 1786 Watters continued as a local preacher until he returned to the itinerancy in 1801.[32] His journal reflects his concern that these two ministries be supplemental, each making its distinct contribution.

Although a travelling ministry is in my estimation one of the greatest blessings, the greatest honor ever conferred on mortal man; yet a local ministry has undoubtedly its use. . . . I have found that a local preacher's sphere of action is much more extensive than I thought it was before I tried it. And though I much prefer that of a travelling preacher; . . . there ought to be the greatest attention in the government of every Church, so to unite and settle these two particular spheres of action in such a manner as for neither to clog, much less destroy the other.[33]

Between 1801 and 1805 American Methodism's first native itinerant once again received appointments as a travelling preacher: Alex-

29. *Short Account*, pp. 80-81. Cf., Asbury, I, pp. 348-350 and John McLean, *Sketch of Rev. Philip Gatch* (Cincinnati: Swormstedt and Poe, 1854), pp. 58-85. Hereafter cited as McLean, *Gatch*.

30. Cf., HAM, I, pp. 192-195, 197-204.

31. *Short Account*, pp. 99-100; and D. A. Watters, *First American Itinerant of Methodism*, William Watters (Cincinnati: Curt and Jennings, 1898), p. 140. Hereafter cited as Watters, *First Itinerant*.

32. *Minutes*, pp. 59, 261.

33. *Short Account*, pp. 117-119.

andria, Georgetown, and "Washington City."[34] Looking back over his ministry in 1806, Watters wrote:

As to the doctrines held and espoused by the Methodists, I have not only embraced them all, but to the present day continue established in them; . . . As to the discipline of the Methodist Church, though I have no doubt but it has its defects, yet I do think that it is by far the most scriptural and the most primitive, of any I have ever seen, and the best calculated to spread the genuine Gospel, and to keep up the life and power of godliness in the Church of Christ. . . . There is no other people with whom I could be so happy, nor with whom I could do as much good.[35]

Very little is known of his last two decades. The family Bible records the date of his death as "the 29th day of March 1827."[36] His grave is a few miles from Washington, D. C., in Fairfax County, Virginia, marked by a simple veined marble shaft.[37]

Philip Gatch

There are many striking similarities between the careers of William Watters and Philip Gatch, the second native American to become an itinerant Methodist preacher. Both were born in 1751 in Maryland of parents who were members of the Church of England. Both experienced long periods of religious turmoil in their youth, finally finding peace among the Methodists. Watters and Gatch began to preach in 1772 and were admitted to the Methodist Conference in 1774.[38] They were married in the same year, 1778, later suffering ill health and locating. Both were members of the committee of five appointed in 1777 to continue the work of the departing missionaries. Both were involved in the controversy over the sacraments.[39] In his extensive journal Philip Gatch described a severe religious crisis when he was seventeen:

The subject of death and judgment rested with great weight upon my mind . . . and what was still worse, a never-ending eternity of pain and misery were constantly before me. . . . I felt that I had lost my standing in the Established Church by not performing the obligations of my induction into it, and this was a source of great distress to me.[40]

34. *Short Account*, pp. 133-139.
35. *Short Account*, pp. 140-141.
36. Watters, *First Itinerant*, p. 154. It is difficult to explain the incorrect date of 1833 given in Barclay, Simpson, Sprague, and Stevens, much less the absence of any record in the *Minutes* or *Christian Advocate*.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
38. *Minutes*, p. 7.
39. McLean, *Gatch*, pp. 6, 7, 9, 22, 24-5, 29, 30, 56, 59.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

At this point, in January, 1772, Nathan Perigo[41] began preaching in that part of Maryland. Gatch attended the first meeting but became alarmed at Perigo's praying.

I never had witnessed such energy nor heard such expressions in prayer before. . . . I attempted to make my escape, but was met by a person at the door who proposed to leave with me; but I knew he was wicked, and that it would not do to follow his counsel, so I returned.[42]

Although forbidden by his father to attend the Methodist services, Gatch continued to seek release from his anguish of soul. In April he went to a prayer meeting where he was overwhelmed by "a grateful sense of the mercy and goodness of God."

I felt the power of God to affect me body and soul. It went through my whole system. I felt like crying aloud. . . . Ere I was aware I was shouting aloud, and should have shouted louder if I had had more strength. I was the first person known to shout in that part of the country.[43]

Later that evening when Philip returned home, his father threatened to drive him away: "he [had] heard me in my exercises near three-quarters of a mile, and knew my voice."[44] With the assistance of his eldest brother, Philip persisted until his family and nearby neighbors were meeting for prayer regularly. Perigo soon formed two Methodist class meetings in the neighborhood and encouraged Gatch to share in the "exhortation." These efforts, however, led the young man into a new state of despair. "I felt such great weakness that to proceed appeared to be impossible. . . . I labored under a sense of want, but not of guilt. I needed strength of soul." After finding helpful guidance in John Wesley's sermon on Salvation by Faith, Gatch received his desired "blessing of sanctification" in a family prayer service.

The Spirit of the Lord came down upon me, and by faith I saw Jesus at the right hand of the Father. I felt such a weight of glory that I fell with my face to the floor, and the Lord said by his Spirit, "You are now sanctified, seek to grow in the fruit of the Spirit." . . . This was in July, a little more than two months after I had received the Spirit of justification.[45]

41. Sometimes spelled "Perigau," he was yet another of those energetic preachers "raised up" by Robert Strawbridge.

42. McLean, *Gatch*, p. 10.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

45. McLean, *Gatch*, pp. 17-18. Cf., HAM, I, pp. 301-307.

In the Fall of 1772, Francis Asbury "formed and traveled a circuit" that included the Gatch neighborhood. "I found in Mr. Asbury a friend in whom I could ever after repose the most implicit confidence."[46] Under the encouragement of both Asbury and Perigo, Gatch began to preach as far away as Pennsylvania. At the quarterly meeting for the Baltimore circuit in 1773,[47] Thomas Rankin, Wesley's "General Assistant" in America, asked Philip Gatch to "travel in the regular work."

This was altogether unexpected to me, but I did not dare to refuse. He then asked me if I had a horse; I answered that I had. Mr. Asbury then asked me if my parents would be willing to give me up. . . . I found that I had no way of retreat, but had to make a full surrender of myself to God and the work. Mr. Rankin then replied, 'You must go to the Jerseys.'[48]

At the second annual conference, held in May of 1774, Gatch is listed along with William Watters as being "admitted"; both are also listed among the Assistants.[49] Since there is another question concerning those "admitted on trial," the activities of Gatch and Watters during 1773 must have been counted as their service "on trial." Gatch's appointments for 1774 were to Frederick circuit and Kent circuit, the regular tour of duty being six months on each appointment.[50] Frederick circuit proved to be one of the centers of opposition to the Methodists because of their suspected ties with England. In the late Fall or Winter of 1775-76, while Gatch was serving his third appointment to this circuit, he was tarred by a mob. "The last stroke made with the paddle with which the tar was applied was drawn across the naked eyeball, which caused severe pain, from which I never entirely recovered."[51]

In 1776 Gatch was appointed to the Hanover circuit in Virginia.

The congregations on the circuit were very large, so that we frequently had to preach in orchards and in the grove. . . . which made it necessary

46. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

47. See Asbury, *Journal and Letters*, I (August 2, 1773), p. 88.

48. McLean, *Gatch*, pp. 24-25. This appointment to New Jersey is especially interesting since the *Minutes* of the conference held in July, 1773, record that William Watters and John King were appointed to New Jersey. As seen earlier in the discussion of Watters' career, Watters did not reach his appointment until November of that year. From this it appears that although William Watters was the first native American to be *appointed* as a traveling preacher, at an annual conference, Philip Gatch actually was appointed and went to that same appointment two or three months ahead of Watters. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

49. *Minutes*, p. 7.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

51. McLean, p. 46.

to extend the voice, my health failed; and my lungs became so affected that for some time I was entirely unable to preach. . . . While in the north, I had to contend with persecution; now bodily affliction attended me.[52]

Gatch praised Devereux Jarratt, who "lived within the bounds of this circuit."

He labored extensively, and was very useful. Several preachers were raised up under his ministry, who became connected with our society, and some of them itinerated. He fitted up his barn for our accommodation, and it became a regular preaching-place, where quarterly meetings were occasionally held. The hospitalities of his house were generously conferred upon us, while he was truly a nursing father to Methodist preachers.[53]

While traveling the Sussex circuit in Virginia during the conference year 1777-78, Gatch once again suffered persecution.

One Sabbath morning, while on my way to my appointment, . . . I was met by two men, of whom I had no knowledge, of a stout and rough appearance. They caught hold of my arms, and turned them in opposite directions with such violence that I thought my shoulders would be dislocated; and it caused the severest pain I ever felt.[54]

His lungs also continued to give him such pain that he was given a smaller circuit north of the James River. In May, "the conference thought it not advisable to appoint me to a circuit, but left me to do what I could where my services might be most needed."[55]

This year I undertook, by farming, to raise a support for my family. We had not in those days the relation of supernumerary or superannuated preachers. When one left the field of labor, either from choice of necessity, he had to do the best he could.[56]

Despite his "retirement" from the traveling ministry,[57] Gatch was apparently the leader of the southern preachers who desired to administer the sacraments.[58] Since the official *Minutes* of the conference that met in Fluvanna County in 1779 omit the steps taken concerning the "ordinances," we are dependent upon Gatch's ac-

52. McLean, pp. 51-52.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 85. Gatch had married Elizabeth Smith of Powhatan County, Virginia, in January, 1778.
57. The *Minutes* do not record Gatch's location; his name simply disappears from the lists.
58. Sweet, *Virginia Methodism*, p. 81.

count. The eighteen preachers present chose and empowered a committee of four to supervise them. Three of the same men were appointed to be "the presbytery": Philip Gatch, Reuben Ellis, and James Foster. They were authorized "to administer the ordinances themselves; and to authorize any other preacher or preachers, approved by them, by the form of laying on of hands."[59] A year later, as we have seen, this plan was "suspended" and an appeal sent to Wesley to solve the problem.[60]

Gatch remained in Virginia until 1798 when he led a small party of relatives and friends to a new settlement in Ohio some twenty miles east of Cincinnati.[61] The main reason for this move was Gatch's increasing dislike of slavery. Although he had freed his own slaves in 1780, he was determined that his family should not live in a land of slavery.[62]

Besides continuing to work extensively as a local preacher, Gatch became active in politics and was elected in 1802 to represent Clermont County at the convention to form a constitution and state government for Ohio. Thereafter he served for more than twenty years as an Associate Judge. His home was a center for Methodist preachers, Francis Asbury making numerous visits. Gatch particularly cherished the memory of a visit made by Bishops Asbury and Whatcoat in 1805.[63] He also corresponded with his old colleagues, William Watters and Edward Drumgoole.[64] He died on December 29, 1835.[65]

Freeborn Garrettson

"I have an ardent desire to be useful, and it greatly rejoices my heart when I see or hear of precious sinners embracing the overtures of mercy."[66] In these words, Freeborn Garrettson summed up his basic philosophy and motivation. The reader of his autobiography will find convincing evidence that Garrettson was truly obsessed with this pragmatic evangelism. "Of all the early native preachers," wrote William Warren Sweet, "Freeborn Garrettson undoubtedly

59. McLean, *Gatch*, pp. 67-68.
60. According to Gatch, this proposal was submitted by Asbury. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-99.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-95.
63. McLean, *Gatch*, pp. 119-150.
64. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-152; Sweet, *The Methodists*, pp. 150-157.
65. *Gatch*, p. 173.
66. Garrettson, *The Experience and Travels of Mr. Freeborn Garrettson, Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in North America* (Philadelphia: John Dickens, 1791), p. v.

stands at the head of the list in total influence exerted on the development of American Methodism."[67]

A third generation native of Maryland, Garrettson was born on August 15, 1752.[68] Describing his religious training, he wrote: "I was early taught the Lord's prayer, [apostles'] creed, and the ten commandments, together with the catechism of the Church of England."[69] The death of his mother and an older sister and two narrow escapes from accidental death himself caused him such deep concern that he bought a collection of the best religious books he could find. "I frequently read, prayed, and wept till after midnight; and often withdrew to the woods, and other private places for prayer."[70] When he was about eighteen years old, Freeborn heard his first Methodist sermon when Robert Strawbridge came through Baltimore county: "I have never spent a few hours so agreeably in my life."[71] In 1772 he heard Francis Asbury preach.

> His doctrine was as salve to a festering wound. I . . . heard the sermon with great delight, bathed in tears. I was not much disturbed in my mind, but sweetly drawn. . . . I followed him to another preaching place. . . . He began to wind around me in such a manner that I found my sins all around me. . . . I was ready to say within myself, how does this stranger know me so well?[72]

Garrettson found himself strongly attracted to the Methodists; "but it was like death to me; for I thought I had rather serve God in any way than among them; at the same time something within would tell me they were right."[73] Like many a proud man before him, young Freeborn struggled to find security in outward acts of piety, fasting, praying, and strictly observing the Sabbath. Then he would attend a Methodist service: "often under Methodist preaching my poor foundation would shake, especially under [that] of dear brother

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67. Sweet, *Men of Zeal: the Romance of American Methodist Beginnings* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1935), p. 136.

68. Nathan Bangs, *The Life of the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson*: Compiled from His Printed and Manuscript Journals and Other Authentic Documents (New York: Emory and Waugh, 1832), p. 25. Hereafter cited as Bangs, *Garrettson.*

69. *Experience and Travels,* p. 9.

70. *Ibid.,* p. 17.

71. Bangs, *Garrettson,* p. 29. This incident is not mentioned in *Experience and Travels.*

72. This passage is taken from Garrettson's manuscript journal, which was edited for microfilming by Robert D. Simpson. The original journal is in Rose Memorial Library, Drew University. Cited hereafter as Garrettson, Journal.

73. *Experience and Travels,* p. 24.

George Shadford."[74] Finally his struggles came to a climax in June, 1775, after hearing Daniel Ruff[75] preach.

> On my way home, being much distressed, I alighted from my horse in a lonely wood, and bowed my knees before the Lord: I sensibly felt two spirits striving with me. . . . Lord, spare me one year more, . . . The answer was, 'Now is the accepted time.' . . . I had not rode another quarter mile, before the Lord met me powerfully . . . 'I have come once more to offer you life and salvation, and it is the last time: choose or refuse.' I was instantly surrounded with a divine power: heaven and hell were disclosed to my view, and life and death were set before me. . . . I threw the reins of my bridle on my horse's neck, and putting my hands together, cried out, Lord, I submit. . . . now, for the first time, I . . . felt that power of faith and love that I had been a stranger to before.[76]

A few days later he attended a Methodist class meeting on Deer Creek and found his heart "more than ever united to this community." Garrettson began to visit his friends and neighbors to witness to his new faith. Eventually he held religious meetings in several places, and "a blessed work of God broke out." Forming a society of those thus converted, he invited Martin Rodda,[77] a Methodist preacher whom he had met, to come and take charge of the society. In turn, Garrettson then spent some nine days traveling with Rodda: "he preached and I exhorted after him." Rodda clearly intended to recruit Garrettson for the traveling ministry and asked him to assist by taking Rodda's circuit alone for a period. "I attended every appointment for which I was engaged," wrote Garrettson, "and we had precious seasons." But he was so afraid of the traveling ministry that he hurried home without meeting Rodda as agreed. "I was willing to do anything about home to promote the cause of religion: but it was like death to me to travel."[78]

Nevertheless, Daniel Ruff persuaded Garrettson to go to the Methodist conference held in Baltimore in May, 1776. "I attended, passed through an examination, and was admitted on trial: and my name was, for the first time, classed among the Methodists; and I

74. *Experience and Travels*, p. 25.

75. Ruff was another native American preacher recruited by Robert Strawbridge. Ruff had been admitted on trial in 1774 and appointed to the Chester circuit with Joseph Yearby. In 1775 he was appointed to Trenton with John King. *Minutes*, pp. 7-9.

76. *Experience and Travels*, pp. 29-31.

77. Martin Rodda, one of Wesley's missionaries, had come to America in 1774 along with James Dempster. His appointment in 1775 was to Baltimore. *Minutes*, p. 9.

78. *Experience and Travels*, p. 45. Cf., pp. 46-47.

received of Mr. Thomas Rankin a written license."[79] Appointed to assist Martin Rodda on the Frederick circuit in Virginia, Garrettson still felt an unwillingness to be a traveling preacher.

> One day on my way to my appointment my difficulties appeared so great, that I turned my horse three different times toward home. . . . Sometimes when I have been at the appointed place, and the people assembling, I have been tempted to hide myself, or wish that I was sick. . . . My Bible, at particular times, would appear so small that I could not find a text.[80]

These doubts and uncertainties continued at least until the year 1779.[81] Looking back on the experience in later years, he wrote: "I believe I had a more severe travail of soul before I submitted to be an itinerant preacher, than I had gone through for justifying grace."[82]

Not all of Garrettson's afflictions were inner. In a letter to John Wesley, written in April, 1785, he summed up his experience in a pattern reminiscent of the Apostle Paul.

> Once I was imprisoned; twice beaten; left on the highway speechless and senseless; once shot at; guns and pistols presented at my breast; once delivered from an armed mob, in the dead time of night, on the highway by a surprising flash of lightning; surrounded frequently by mobs; stoned frequently: I have had to escape for my life at dead time of night.[83]

Two concerns of Garrettson's brought much of this suffering upon him. "Two things were a great distress to my mind: (1) the spirit of fighting; and (2) that of slavery, which ran among the people. I was resolved to be found in my duty, and keep back no part of the counsel of God."[84] In 1775 he was court-martialed and fined for refusing to answer the call to muster "to learn the art of war."[85] In 1777 he was harassed in Virginia because he refused to take the loyalty oath.

> I was informed I must either leave the state, take the oath, or go to jail. I told those who came to tender the oath to me, that I professed myself a friend to my country. . . . I think the oath is too binding on my conscience; moreover I never swore an oath in my life.[86]

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79. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.
82. Bangs, *Garrettson*, p. 51.
83. Quoted in Bangs, *Garrettson*, p. 168.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Garrettson described 1778 as "a season peculiarly trying to Methodist preachers." The very fact that the first Methodist preachers were from England, under the direction of John Wesley, who had written a pamphlet against the Americans, "was enough in itself to excite suspicions in the ruling party here against the preachers." Moreover, Martin Rodda was spreading the king's proclamation on his circuit before he fled to the British fleet. Worst of all, "a backslidden Methodist" named Chancey Clowe, "once a pious man of considerable note in the society," had actually raised a band of three hundred men and attempted to join the British fleet in Chesapeake bay.[87]

Garrettson's attitude toward slavery was another cause of his persecution. During a family prayer service in 1775, he received a command from his Lord: "It is not right for you to keep your fellow creatures in bondage; you must let the oppressed go free."

> I paused a minute, and then replied, "Lord, the oppressed shall go free." . . . I told them they did not belong to me, and that I did not desire their services without making them compensation: I was now at liberty to proceed in worship. . . . It was God, not man, that taught me the impropriety of holding slaves. . . . I believe it to be a crying sin.[88]

It is not surprising that Garrettson was once beaten by a slave-owner in a violent rage, swearing that "I would spoil all his negroes."[89] Later, in 1777, while on the Roanoke circuit, he wrote:

> Many times did my heart ache on account of the slaves in this part of the country, and many tears did I shed, both in Virginia and Carolina. . . . I endeavoured frequently to inculcate the doctrine of freedom in a private way, and this procured me the ill will of some who were in that unmerciful practice. I would often set apart times to preach to the blacks, and adapt my discourse to them alone.[90]

In 1781 on the Sussex circuit in Virginia, Garrettson declared that he was, "in a particular manner, led to preach against the practice of slave holding. Several were convinced and liberated their slaves."[91]

While it did not result in physical persecution, the charge of "enthusiasm" was also thrown at Garrettson. This was an offensive term in those days, and Methodists disclaimed such practices.

87. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.
88. *Experience and Travels*, pp. 36-37.
89. Bangs, *Garrettson*, p. 45.
90. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 139. Cf., pp. 151-152.

Individuals thought me an enthusiast, because I talked so much about feelings, and having impressions to go to particular places. I know the word of God is our infallible guide, and by it we are to try our dreams and feelings. I also know, that both sleeping and waking, things of a divine nature have been revealed to me.[92]

At times Garrettson's dreams were visions of sinners suffering the torments of hell;[93] at others they related to Garrettson's struggles for faith and assurance.[94]

Although space does not permit a full account of Garrettson's appointments during these years, the two selections following illustrate the manner in which he sought to be "useful." The first comes from Sunday, July 5, 1779:

I preached in Dover a little after sunrise, then rode four miles and preached at brother B.'s at nine, to hundreds who stood and sat under the trees . . . I rode on six miles and preached at one o'clock to a listening multitude. . . . I rode five miles and preached again at brother W.'s. . . . This day I stood upward of six hours in the four sermons, and concluded about sunset.[95]

Summarizing his work, in 1781, Garrettson wrote:

During the year, I travelled about five thousand miles, preached about five hundred sermons, visited most of the circuits in Virginia and North Carolina, and opened one new circuit in which the Lord began a blessed work, so that many, both rich and poor, joined the society.[96]

A comment that appears only in his manuscript journal explains his attitude toward such work. After three or four pages of detailed descriptions of trials encountered in traveling through snow and ice, Garrettson wrote: "Who would take all this pain that really believed in ye Doctrine of Unconditional Election & Reprobation."[97]

Since Garrettson participated in so many of the crucial conferences between 1776 and 1824, his journal is of primary significance to the historian. For some events, however, his record is frustratingly brief—the conference in 1779, for example: "Wed., & Thurs. We confered together. There wasn't one jarring string. Blessed be God, Jesus was with us Every moment. We seemed to be knit together."[98] For the famous "Christmas Conference" his account is more helpful.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
93. Bangs, *Garrettson*, pp. 50, 77-87, 124, 143-144.
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 40, 51, 118, 122-123, 130.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
97. Garrettson, Journal, January 28, 1784.
98. Garrettson, Journal, April 28-29, 1779.

After indicating his surprise at hearing Wesley's new plan for ordination, Garrettson wrote: "I thought I would sit in Silence," and continued:[99]

I thought it expedient to return with him [Dr. Thomas Coke] to a Qt. Mt. held in Kent County, where I expected to meet Mr. Asbury, and a number of ye Preachers. About 15 Met, we sat in Conference, it was thought expedient to call a General Conference to Baltimore, and . . . I was appointed to go and Call ye Conference—I sit [*sic*] out to Vergenia [*sic*] and Carolina—and a tedious Journey I had. My dear Master inabled me to ride Near one Thousand Miles in about 5 weeks, and preached going, and returning Constantly.[100] The Conference began on Christmas day—We with one Consent fell in to Mr. Wesley's plan—16 were ordained, and I was appointed for ye Spreading of ye Gospel in Novascotia [*sic*], instead of going to ye South which was a considerable Cross. Nevertheless I was willing to take it up in Conformity to ye Voice of Conference.[101]

Garrettson was in Nova Scotia from mid-February, 1785, to April 10, 1787,[102] returning just in time to attend the conference at Baltimore which declared its independence from John Wesley. The American preachers were angered because Wesley had changed the date and place of meeting for the conference and appointed Richard Whatcoat a joint superintendent with Francis Asbury.[103] According to Jesse Lee, Wesley had also "Given directions for brother F. Garrettson to be ordained a superintendent for Nova Scotia."

When the business was taken under consideration, some of the preachers insisted that if he was ordained for that station, he should confine himself wholly to that place for which he was set apart; and not be at liberty to return again to this part of the country. Mr. Garrettson did not feel freedom to enter into an obligation of that kind, and chose rather to continue as he was; and therefore was not ordained.[104]

Garrettson, however, claimed that he had expected to be reappointed to Nova Scotia. "What transpired in the conference during my ab-

99. Garrettson's published version of the journal *is* silent about his scepticism! Cf., *Experience and Travels*, p. 217. The manuscript journal gives more details about the Christmas Conference.

100. Thomas Coke's imagery is *tradition* by now: "Him we sent off, like an arrow, from north to south, directing him to send messengers to the right and left, and to gather all the preachers together at Baltimore on Christmas eve." *Extracts of the Journals of the Rev. Dr. Coke's Five Visits to America* (London, G. Paramore, 1793), p. 16.

101. Garrettson, Journal (January, 1784, to June, 1785), pp. 40-42.

102. *Experience and Travels*, pp. 218, 239.

103. Cf., Wesley's letter to Thomas Coke, Sept. 6, 1786: Asbury's letter to Whatcoat, March 25, 1787; and Thomas Ware, *Sketches of the Life and Travels of Rev. Thomas Ware* (New York: Mason & Lane, 1840), pp. 129-131.

104. Lee, *Short History*, p. 126. Cf., HAM, I, 424-428.

sence, I know not; but I was astonished when the appointments were read, to hear my name mentioned to preside in the Peninsula."[105] Apparently, Garrettson's "appointment" suffered the same fate as Whatcoat's; the objection was to Wesley's interference, not to the persons so named.

Garrettson spent most of the years between 1787 and his superannuation in 1817 as a presiding elder[106] in Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New England. He attended every General Conference from 1792 to 1824; therefore, the detailed outline of church polity written in his Journal is particularly interesting. According to Robert Simpson, "It was Garrettson's wish that it would be published when Bangs edited his Journals, but Bangs suppressed the plan."[107] Garrettson advocated the dividing of the whole connection into annual conferences, each to have its own bishop who would be amenable for his conduct to that conference. In making out the appointments within his conference, the bishop could call upon any of the elders for counsel, and he would read the finished plan to the conference "two days before it rises," provided that "if it should be necessary to put any thing to vote, it shall be done without debate." All of the active bishops would "have a seat in the General Conference," but only one would be elected chairman. The other bishops and elders, then, would compose "the grand College of Presbiters [*sic*], with a Cyprean [*sic*] Elevated at head." The General Conference would "station the superintendents."[108]

The reader of Garrettson's Journal is struck by his close friendship with Francis Asbury. One incident will have to suffice: During the course of a visit to Garrettson's home at Rhinebeck on the eastern shore of the Hudson River,[109] the two became engrossed in a discussion of Asbury's attitude toward the Methodists in America. Garrettson told Asbury, frankly, that he must give up the idea that he was an American John Wesley. "Further, he cautioned Asbury that his belief that all his conference appointments were made by Divine

105. Bangs, *Garrettson*, p. 191. See also Garrettson's letter to John Wesley, Sept. 25, 1787; *ibid.*, pp. 180-182.

106. See HAM, I, pp. 465-471, for a brief but excellent discussion of this office.

107. Robert Drew Simpson, "Freeborn Garrettson: American Methodist Pioneer," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Drew University, 1954, p. 209.

108. Garrettson, Journal, May 1, 1824.

109. Garrettson married Catharine Livingston on June 30, 1793. They had one child, a daughter born in 1794. This home was built in 1799. Bangs, *Garrettson*, pp. 240-242.

inspiration was not only erroneous but also harmful. In spite of such frankness, they remained true friends."[110]

Freeborn Garrettson died on September 26, 1827, in New York City, where he had gone as a guest preacher to "the Duane Street Church."[111]

Jesse Lee

The first native Virginian to enter the Methodist ministry, Jesse Lee became not only one of the most distinguished leaders of American Methodism but also its first historian.[112] William Warren Sweet ranked Lee along with Watters, Gatch and Garrettson as the "four most important leaders in Virginia Methodism during the trying years of the Revolutionary War,"[113] and he is generally acclaimed "the Apostle of Methodism in New England."[114] Nathan Bangs considered him to be "the ruling spirit of the Church in his day."[115]

> He had a fine intelligent face . . . an almost intuitive perception of the workings of the human heart; and no man knew better than he how to adapt his measures to the ends they were designed to accomplish. . . . There was scarcely anything to which his shrewdness and energy proved inadequate. . . . It was significant of the high estimation in which he was held by the Church at large, that he came within a single vote of being chosen Bishop.[116]

Laban Clark also noted that Lee's "countenance was marked by a high degree of intelligence, and almost always wore a genial smile, that betokened a fountain of kindly feeling within. He had great energy of mind and purpose, as well as deep insight into the springs of human action."[117]

Bangs described Lee as "an earnest, vigorous and faithful preacher. His manner was characterized by great fluency, and his thoughts which were in themselves always weighty, were clothed in plain, though appropriate, language, well fitted to impress the heart and

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110. Mary Rutherford Garrettson (his daughter), quoted in Simpson, "Freeborn Garrettson," pp. 174-175.

111. Bangs, *Garrettson*, pp. 322, 327.

112. Sweet, *Virginia Methodism*, p. 92.

113. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

114. Sprague, *Annals*, p. 85. George C. Baker, *An Introduction to the History of Early New England Methodism 1789-1839* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1941). 138 pages.

115. Quoted Sprague, op. cit., p. 85.

116. Sprague, *Annals*, pp. 85-86.

117. Quoted in Sprague, p. 86.

conscience."[118] Laban Clark noted Lee's "remarkable power in the pulpit"; and although he spoke effortlessly, he "had a prodigiously powerful voice. His preaching was in a very familiar style; but it was pithy, pungent, and sometimes exceedingly striking. He seemed fond of surprising his audience by things which they did not expect."[119] Lee was also remembered for his imposing physique: he weighed more than two hundred and fifty pounds.[120]

Born in Prince George County, Virginia, on the 12th of March, 1758, Jesse was the second son of Nathaniel and Elizabeth Lee.[121] As a young man he experienced religious anxieties that were beyond the reach of the Established Church of his parents. Robert Williams began forming Methodist societies in that part of Virginia in the Spring of 1774. The entire Lee family responded to Williams' invitation, and their home became a regular preaching place on the newly established Brunswick circuit and a home to the itinerant preachers. The following year George Shadford, Edward Drumgoole and William Glendenning travelled the Brunswick circuit and a great revival swept the area. In 1777 Jesse moved to North Carolina to assist a widowed relative. Here he was appointed a class leader on the Roan Oak circuit in 1788 and made his first attempts at exhorting, at least once at the invitation of Freeborn Garrettson. In 1799 he began preaching and took John Dickens' place on the circuit for a few weeks. Drafted into the militia for three and a half months in 1780, he preached to the soldiers at every opportunity.[122]

During this period of his life, and especially in 1781, Jesse "experienced many severe exercises of mind [as] he was led towards the

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118. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

119. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

120. On May 4, 1779, Lee wrote in his Journal: "After we had finished our business in conference, four of the largest preachers amongst us went to a friend's store, and were weighed. My weight was 259 lbs., Seely Bunn's 252, Thomas Lucas' 245, and Thomas Sergent weighed 220; in all 976 lbs. A *wonderful* weight for four Methodist preachers, and all of us travel on horseback." Quoted in Minton Thrift, *Memoir of the Rev. Jesse Lee, with Extracts from His Journals* (New York: Bangs and Mason, 1923), p. 249. Cited hereafter as *Memoir.*

121. Leroy M. Lee, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Jesse Lee* (Charleston, S. C.: Published by John Early, 1848), p. 19. Cited hereafter as *Life and Times.*

122. Because he refused to bear arms, Jesse was assigned to drive a baggage wagon and later to be the sergeant of the pioneers (some type of non-combatant work). *Memoirs*, pp. 15-35.

Methodist itinerating ministry."[123] In April, 1782, he attended the conference held at Ellis' Chapel and

was permitted to sit in the room while the preachers were transacting their business. . . . The union and brotherly love which I saw among the preachers exceeded every thing I had ever seen before, and caused me to wish that I was worthy to have a place amongst them.[124]

Nevertheless, when Francis Asbury urged him to take a circuit, he declined, being "very sensible of [his] own weakness" and "afraid of hurting the cause."[125] The Methodists persisted, however, and in November Jesse responded to a request from Caleb Pedicord[126] to accompany Edward Drumgoole to form a new circuit in northwest North Carolina. This work was soon accomplished with the generous assistance of the Anglican "Parson" Pettigrew,[127] and was called the Campden circuit.[128]

Jesse Lee finally consented to take a full-time appointment at the conference in 1783. He was admitted on trial and sent to Caswell circuit in North Carolina.[129] "Notwithstanding I have had ten years experience as a Christian, and have been a public speaker more than five years, I trembled at the thought of the station I was about to fill."[130] The following year, 1784, he was appointed to Salisbury circuit in North Carolina. During this year, Lee noted a characteristic of his preaching that was to remain with him.

While I was speaking of the love of God, I felt so much of that love in my own soul, that I burst into a flood of tears, and could speak no more for some time, but stood and wept. I then began again; but was so much overcome, that I had to stop and weep several times before I finished.[131]

On December 12, 1784, Lee received "an official note" informing him of the arrival of Dr. Coke, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas

123. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
125. *Memoir*, pp. 42-43.
126. Pedicord, a native of Maryland, was admitted to the conference in 1779. He died not long after attending the Christmas Conference: "a man of sorrows . . . acquainted with grief . . . dead to the world, and much devoted to God." *Minutes*, pp. 18, 53. This is Thomas Ware's "pathetic Pedicord." *Sketches*, p. 85.
127. Charles Pettigrew, a native of Pennsylvania, was one of the few Church of England clergy who extended active cooperation and appreciation to the Methodists. Cf., Asbury, *Journal & Letters*, I, pp. 450-451.
128. *Memoir*, pp. 45, 48.
129. *Minutes*, p. 38.
130. *Memoir*, p. 52.
131. *Memoir*, pp. 64-65.

Vasey, and of the calling of a conference to be held in Baltimore beginning December 25. Being five hundred miles from Baltimore and with less than two weeks to travel that distance in winter weather, Jesse Lee decided not to attempt to attend the conference. This was a great disappointment to him. As early as January, 1778,[132] he had begun to keep written accounts of every meeting he attended and to obtain all the information he could about the progress of Methodism. It must have been a lasting and exceedingly painful memory that he was not given adequate notice to participate in the constituting convention of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Two events of Jesse Lee's career in 1785 had life-long significance for him. The first was his close friendship with Francis Asbury that developed during a month-long tour he made at Asbury's invitation. The second was the chance conversation with a young man from Massachusetts, from whom he learned about the customs and people of New England. Lee determined to preach the gospel to that people.[133]

Although he immediately informed Bishop Asbury of his ardent desire to be sent to New England as a missionary, Lee had to wait four years for that appointment. In May, 1789, he was appointed to Stanford circuit in Connecticut. With this appointment, according to George C. Baker, "New England Methodism became permanent."[134]

On June 17, after being refused the use of a house, a deserted building, and an orchard, Lee preached his first sermon in New England. His welcome to New Haven was more encouraging.

> At 5 o'clock we met at the state-house, at the ringing of the bell, but some of the influential men insisted on my going into the meeting house. . . . At first I did not feel very well satisfied, being raised in a high pulpit with a soft cushion under my hands, but in a little time I felt the fire from above; my heart was warmed, and drawn out in love to my hearers. . . . Some told me they were much pleased with the discourse.[135]

From this time until 1797 a recurring phrase in Lee's journal begins: "I am the first preacher of our way that has ever visited this part of the country."[136] A passage from 1790 is also typical:

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132. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

133. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

134. George C. Baker, *Early New England Methodism*, p. 7. Cf., Asbury's comment: "New England stretcheth out the hand to our ministry, and I trust thousands will shortly feel its influence. My soul will praise the Lord." *Journal and Letters*, I (May 1789).

135. *Memoir*, pp. 114-115.

136. *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 128, 220, 240.

It is now sixteen months and eight days since our last conference, and in this time, I have travelled several thousand miles, and preached in six states, and in chief parts of the large towns in New England. In most places, I have met with a much kinder reception than I could have expected, among persons holding principles so different from mine; but yet, I have been opposed, and have been under the disagreeable necessity of spending much of my time on controverted points.[137]

Clearly, the experience in New England convinced Jesse Lee of the need of ordination, and he finally was ordained in October, 1790, at the New York conference.

Although Lee was reappointed to New England in 1796, in August of 1797 he received a letter from Bishop Asbury asking him to become Asbury's traveling assistant. For the next three years Lee traveled with Asbury or held conferences in Asbury's place.

At the General Conference held at Baltimore in May, 1800, Bishop Asbury insisted that another bishop be elected because of his continuing ill health. The conference agreed, and an election was held, Richard Whatcoat and Jesse Lee receiving the most votes. According to Asbury, Whatcoat was elected by a majority of only four votes.[138] This loss must have been a disappointment for Lee, because Asbury had encouraged him to expect election.[139] Also, Lee believed that his chances of being elected had been harmed by a false rumor that Asbury had been critical of him. At Lee's request Asbury spoke to the conference denying the report and praising Lee for his past services. Lee wrote: "We traced the report until we fixed it on T.... L...., and he did not clear himself."[140]

Jesse Lee is significant for his contribution to the development of the delegated General Conference. His letter to Asbury in July, 1791, is possibly the earliest proposal for such a conference. Asbury wrote:

This day brother Jesse Lee put a paper in my hand, proposing the election of not less than two, nor more than four preachers from each conference, to form a general conference in Baltimore, 1792, to be continued annually.[141]

As Professor Frederick Norwood has written: "This proposal is remarkable in that it contains the germ of the system that was finally

137. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
138. *Journal and Letters*, II (May 18, 1800), p. 231.
139. *Journal and Letters*, III (Sept. 12, 1797), p. 164.
140. *Memoir*, pp. 268-269.
141. *Journal and Letters*, I (July 7, 1791).
142. HAM, I, p. 435.

achieved in 1808."[142] Lee was also responsible for the third restrictive rule adopted by the General Conference in 1808: "The General Conference shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government, so as to do away Episcopacy, or to destroy the plan of our itinerant general Superintendency."[143]

Jesse Lee's prestige is illustrated by the fact that he was elected the chaplain of the United States House of Representatives for five terms, 1809 to 1813, and chaplain of the Senate in 1814. He was also a delegate to the General Conference in 1812 and in 1816. At the latter conference, he took part in the procession when Bishop Asbury's body was brought to Baltimore to be buried in the Eutah Street Methodist Church.[144]

Jesse Lee's last appointment was to Annapolis, Maryland, and his last sermon was preached at a camp meeting on the eastern shore of Maryland on August 24, 1816. He became ill that evening and lingered until September 12. Almost his last words were: "Give my regards to Bishop M'Kendree, and tell him that I die in love with all the preachers; that I love him, and that he lives in my heart."[145]

While many other men could have been presented here among these early native Methodist preachers, these four stand out for their distinctive contributions: *Primus inter pares.*

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143. Lee, *Life and Times,* p. 443.
144. *Memoir,* pp. 326-338.
145. *Memoir,* pp. 340-341.

Enthusiasm vs. Education? Early Methodist Preachers in New England

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The Virginia Methodist, Jesse Lee, wrote to Ezekiel Cooper in 1789, "I think the time is come to favor New England, and if I had acceptable preachers with me I believe we should soon cover these states." Lee had been appointed in May to Stamford Circuit. "I am the first," he said, "that has been appointed to this state, by the Methodist conference." Bishop Asbury, in making the appointment, had apparently overcome his earlier reluctance to invade a section he had said (in 1788) was "sufficiently provided for in the way of religious privilege." Now he wrote, "New England stretcheth out the hand to our ministry and I trust thousands will shortly feel its influence." This was, perhaps, a little too optimistic, but when the first reports came in the Bishop wrote in his *Journal*, "I felt glad in my soul notwithstanding Brother Lee is on forbidden ground."

Key words here are *"acceptable preachers"* and *"forbidden ground"*; they almost summarize the Methodist invasion of New England. Whether or not they were "acceptable preachers," the Methodist itinerants had unshaken confidence that they were first and always preachers called by God, and chosen by Wesley. He had named them preachers from the first and had ordained them so, defending by Scripture and terse logic their right to be such. Moreover they were *travelling* preachers, and in New England, against the long, settled congregational pastorates, this wandering enthusiasm was particularly suspect. It recalled too painfully the irregularities of Whitefield's revival forty years before, a revival now frozen into solemn rigidity. In that day, the Connecticut pastors had given their "testimony and advice" on such preaching, doubting, as they said, Whitefield's orderly call and his conversion, and urging the churches to reject him. Such a ministry as he claimed needed proof, they added, "by a miracle or some other equivalent attestation from

Heaven that may fairly satisfy a rational and impartial mind." Their wail, that "numbers of illiterate exhorters swarm about us as locusts from the bottomless pit," was to be echoed with only small variations after Lee's and Asbury's optimistic predictions of 1789. Perhaps if Richard Whatcoat's *Journal* had been read by the New England pastors of the 1790's they could have concluded that Methodist illiteracy was not confined to the exhorters. A few random excerpts from an extant fragment of 1792 will illustrate the literary "style" of one soon to be elected bishop:

Feb. 8 . . . met the subsc/ribers who unanimously elected John Staples, John Black as a commitey to form rules to regulate the carying on the Liberay.

Feb. 19 . . . I preached the deddecation sermon (at the New Church). Bro Mann preached at night and the Black people sung two hymns.

Mar. 28 . . . it Rained, Thundred and Litned Smartly so that few attended Prayer meeting . . . It was a sollom time.

May 9 . . . We had a Comfortable and refreshing time at our Love feast: but poor ..... was thrown into a terable Fit of ystericks which continued til morning.

June 3. We had a gentle brees.

June 7. Was very sik. Took a puke.

Being a preacher acceptable to John Wesley (or to Jesse Lee) was not the same as qualifying to "proclaim the Savior's name through Connecticut's farthest bounds." The good qualities recognized by Wesley in the first itinerants underneath such scholastic limitations he must have seen in Whatcoat and in many others, but they tended to go unnoticed by the Yankees who expected in their ministers some intellectual accomplishments.

One of the first signs that the Methodist preachers in New England had come to "forbidden ground" arose out of the obvious fact that they were Southerners. What natural gifts and attractive manners they had (and there is no question about their having these) were overlooked because of that suspicion of the South noticeable even in the 18th century among New Englanders and so easily matched, we know, by Southerners. Jesse Lee and his brother, John, were Virginians, as also were Jeremiah Cosden and Christopher Spry. From Maryland came George Roberts, Fredus Aldridge, Robert Green, George Pickering, Ezekiel Cooper, Peter Moriarty

and that Shadrach Bostwick whom Thomas Robbins of Hartford once called "a dangerous character."

The one comment President Ezra Stiles of Yale made when he heard Francis Asbury preach was that the Bishop "came from Maryland," and, after hearing Jesse Lee, his entry for March 21, 1790 ("Ldsdy") was "The Methodist preacher is come from the Southward again and preached a lecture at V this afternoon." In 1793 the Reverend Nathan Williams of Tolland, Connecticut, in an April Fast Day Sermon, spoke out the "Standing Order's" resentment of the itinerant intrusions: "Shall we disbelieve our ministers whom we know and whose moral characters have never been impeached . . . and at the same time be obliged to give full credit to strangers who were born and brought up hundreds of miles from us?" The Methodist, George Roberts, answered immediately in his *Strictures*: "Is it a sin to be a stranger in New England or to be born a few hundred miles distant from it? If so I am sorry for it. . . . It is reported no man should come to Boston to preach without coming through Cambridge. And how dare any man come and offer himself in Connecticut for a minister unless he comes through New Haven?"

George Roberts was touching a particularly sensitive spot. Being from the South was not the Methodist preachers' worst handicap, of course. It *was* pretty clear that the appointed itinerants were not formally educated men and some of them went so far as to boast of this. The standards and goals set by Wesley for reading and study had never been well realized in America. Apparently Wesley himself had waived these requirements when he saw genuine piety and natural gifts in men like Richard Whatcoat. By the felt urgency of the revival, and the drive to "spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land" the emphasis had long been put on the Conference answer to Question 36 in the *Minutes*: "What is the best general method of preaching? A. (1) to invite. (2) to convince. (3) to offer Christ. (4) to build up; and to do this in some measure in every sermon." Promptness and regularity ("Be sure never to disappoint a congregation, unless in case of life or death, [and] Begin and end precisely at the time appointed"), simplicity ("choose the plainest texts you can.") and skill in "extemporizing." ("Let young preachers often exhort, without taking a text")—all these were important advices in the *Minutes*, practical directions easier to obey than the injunctions to read the recommended books. Billy Hibbard confined his reading for the most part, he said, to Fletcher's *Checks*, *Christians' Pattern*, *Saint's Rest*, Law's *Call* and Alleine's *Alarm*, a fair example

for most of the itinerants and a striking contrast to the complete theological training insisted on by the Congregationalists.

Hibbard once said that, while he was struggling, because of his shortcomings in education, against the call to preach, he received the "sweet impression" that the people to whom he would go "did not consider a college education as the essential qualification for a minister." This is debatable, but Hibbard's "sweet impression" was shared by many of his fellow preachers and by many of their successors for several years. As late as 1848, Dr. Thomas E. Bond, Jr. in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* took a firm stand on the principle that "Methodism is a religion without a Philosophy." He wrote,

> The first germ of rationalism was in Cain . . . . who was the first philosopher, the first man who rejected revelation to follow reason. . . . Philosophy has proved itself absolutely fruitless and must be considered hopeless by every man who has made himself acquainted with the history of intellectual effort. . . . In their pride and perverseness the learned saw in Christianity a means of reviving rationalism . . . a new science, a sort of composite intellectual architecture, arose which they named Theology, or the Science of God! . . . and this theology took the sap and vigor of the church. . . . But Wesley perceived the true spiritual nature of Christianity, seeing in it God's plan of saving sinners, not making savans [*sic*] . . . Methodism is plain truth for a plain people.

Ideas like the above were not representative of all the leaders of Methodism in the early 19th century, but they reveal a majority opinion among them and an issue especially sharpened in New England. The *Methodist Review* for October 1842 resented the charge, however, that Methodists were ignorant both in the ministry and in the laity, and pointed to the work of Wesley, Watson, Clarke, Benson, Fisk, Emory, Ruter and others but added "we freely admit the Methodists as a people are and have been comparatively unlearned in human sciences. . . . As a church she was not raised up to promote the progress of science and literature" but "to spread Scriptural holiness over the earth."

These were criticisms that only Methodists could gracefully make. When the *Christian Spectator* in 1835 said that the watch cry of Methodism had long been "away with books and education and let the Lord send us ministers who have graduated in the third heaven," the *Christian Advocate* retorted, "This is double-distilled falsehood."

Criticism smarted. There was enough truth in the Congregational charges to be embarrassing, and the 1820's and 1830's witnessed action. The New Market Wesleyan Academy (now Wilbraham), Wesleyan University at Middletown, and the Boston School

of Theology were the first steps—plain answers to the New England critics. At the same time these schools earned some denominational justification by offering an education free from "the poison of Calvinism" and without an "adventitious bias to habits of thinking."

But champions for college and theological training for the preachers had rough going. *Zion's Herald* cautioned in 1824 that "we also need ministers content with being great only as they are good. . . . If many of our theological students would leave their Hebrew, their French and their grammar and study with more attention the Book of Providence, the book of nature, the heart of man and the Book of God, none would be ready to despond."

When the *Christian Advocate* ventured to print, in 1834, a number of articles favoring theological seminaries, a local preacher wrote to the editor accusing him of being "anti-Methodistical, not to say anti-Christian"; for "Congregational and Presbyterian plans for ministerial education would not suit Methodism," he wrote, "any more than Saul's armour would fit David." Whereupon the editor promised to be more careful, at the same time cautioning his readers not to interpret the *Advocate*'s use of the word "education" as meaning "theological education."

The *Methodist Magazine* that year was a little bolder. It ran the risk of displeasing many readers when it printed an article by Rev. LaRoy Sunderland in support of "A theological education." This article had first been offered to the *Christian Advocate* but the senior editor had thought it inadvisable to insert it since such a subject had not been discussed in that paper. In fact, even some articles on "an educated ministry among us" had had to be discontinued because of the unpopularity of such ideas.

For printing Sunderland's plea the *Methodist Magazine* had to deny the charge of being both "anti-Methodistical" and "anti-Wesleyan," it had to defend Mr. Sunderland, and it had to quote many paragraphs from Wesley's sermons in support of a sound theological education. Mr. Sunderland, at the same time, cleared himself by laboriously explaining that his Essay "did not plead for theological *schools* but only to show the importance of theological *learning*." Moreover, before going to the press, his paper had been read and approved, he said, by Dr. Fisk, Dr. Olin, Dr. Bangs, the Rev. Mr. Durbin and the Rev. Mr. Merritt—an impressive endorsement by several of the "firsts" in American Methodist theological education.

In the first years, however, of the Methodist invasion of New England the preachers had no leaders nor models of the intellectual

stature of Fisk, Olin or Durbin. But they did have men who could easily, perhaps unconsciously, attract attention and respect by manners, speech, good sense and wit—much as John Wesley himself had done.

The amiable Jesse Lee (the "apostle" to New England) was an immense man, more than six feet tall, weighing over two hundred and fifty pounds. He was thirty-one years old when he began his wayside preaching in Fairfield County, Connecticut. His rather handsome features, large gray eyes, fair skin and black hair were well set off by his Quaker-like dress and erect military bearing. He was a good singer, an eloquent speaker and a jovial companion. Quick at repartee (sometimes too quick), he was able to fascinate all who talked with him by alternative flashes of wit and dramatic seriousness. Such gracious manners, commanding personality and gallantry with a flourish made a strong appeal to the hearts of New England country men and women.

Ezekiel Cooper, twenty-nine when he came from Maryland to be the Presiding Elder of the Boston District in 1792, was not so handsome. A large wen on his right jaw was too prominent and he was inclined to be a little careless about his dress. But he had a commanding appearance with his six feet, three inches of stature and "heavy frame." He was not quite so heavy (one could almost say corpulent) as Lee, and no doubt surpassed the latter in preaching ability. Cooper had an amazing voice, was unequalled in debate and was called Lycurgus by his fellow preachers because of his "attainments" in scholarship.

When he was twenty-four, George Roberts came from Maryland to the Stratford Circuit and spent six years in Connecticut, Rhode Island, western Massachusetts and Vermont. This was a stocky, puffy-cheeked man with a double chin and long black beard. He gained some distinction for his stolid, deliberative type of preaching and was in considerable demand among those who liked an instructive, methodical and plain sermon.

Then there was Daniel Smith of Philadelphia, who was sent in 1790 when he was twenty-one, to be with Lee in the vicinity of Boston. Smith was more popular in the cities of eastern Massachusetts than were his fellow laborers. Perhaps this was because he immediately gave the impression, a correct one, that he was a gentleman. His soft voice, "good to conciliate, persuade and soothe," had not the quality, says Stevens, that would "excite violent emotions in the

pulpit." He, too, was a "large, well-built, fine looking man," of gentle earnest manner, and evidently a sincere student.

What the earlier Methodist preacher lacked in education, which was much, he made up for in a certain gallantry and energetic pulpit manner that could not fail to impress simple people. There was no question as to his earnestness; the fire in his eye, the tears on his cheek, the emotion in his voice spoke of his love for souls and his burning zeal for Methodism. When New England young men joined the ranks, as lay exhorters or licensed preachers on trial, they were quick to imitate the style of their southern leaders. Such freedom of gesture, virility and humor were not common in New England pulpits. The Congregational ministers were not given to telling sad or funny stories in sermons, but the itinerant Methodist had no end of anecdotes to help his application. He often spoke with pride of the practical nature of his sermons and pointed to the metaphysical lectures of the established ministers with ridicule. Lee said he gave the people "no velvet mouth preaching," but talked "loud and plain." Billy Hibbard preached noisily at Newtown and "left Calvinism bleeding." The uneducated hearers, even the illiterate, whose minds could not grasp such subjects as "The Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin," "A Dissertation on the History, Eloquence and Poetry of the Bible," or lectures on natural and moral ability, had little difficulty in understanding the Methodist whose favorite texts were "Ye must be born again," "The wages of sin is death," and "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." At Weston Jesse Lee attacked election for two hours from the text, "Many are called but few are chosen." Timothy Merritt, at Durham, Maine, defended Methodism by dramatic allusion to the words, "By whom shall Jacob arise? For he is small," and Lee, at Tolland, Connecticut, preached on "These that have turned the world upside down."

Those colorful qualities of diversity, energy and enthusiasm can be accounted for partly by the nature of the revival with which the preachers were so intimately a part, and partly by the genius of John Wesley in coupling, among his first missionaries to America, men of different qualities and temperament. His choice, at the same time, of Thomas Rankin the disciplinarian, and George Shadford, the evangelist shows how the movement was directed by seemingly incompatible types. Jesse Lee tells us how these two cooperated at Bushill's Chapel in Virginia, in 1776. Rankin preached first.

He gave us a good discourse in the forenoon, and tried to keep the people from making any noise while he was speaking, and at the close of the meeting, he thanked the people for their good behaviour, and told them he was much better pleased with them at that time, than he was when among them before. He then went to a friend's house to get his dinner, and was to return and preach again in the afternoon. As soon as he was gone, the people felt at liberty, and began to sing, pray and talk to their friends, till the heavenly flame kindled in their souls, and sinners were conquered, and twelve or fifteen souls were converted to God, before the preacher returned from his dinner; and many of the people were sorry that he returned at all, knowing that he was not fond of so much noise. It was with much difficulty that he prevailed on them to be quiet enough for him to begin to preach. He gave us a good discourse, and I was pleased with it. Yet the people did not hold in till he was done, but some of them began to cry and pray aloud for mercy on their poor souls. He tried again to stop them; but he could not. After that he sat down, and asked Mr. Shadford, who had been preaching among them for some months before, to speak to them, which he did with pleasure, and in a little time cried out in his usual manner, "Who wants a Saviour? the first that believes shall be justified." In a few minutes the house was ringing with the cries of broken hearted sinners, and the shouts of happy believers. It was an awful time indeed; and several souls were justified, and many Christians were lost in wonder, love and praise.

It is clear that the Bushill Virginians wanted more of Shadford's rousing shouts and less of Rankin's restraining decorum. Rankin seems to have had no choice but to "cooperate with the inevitable"; he let them have the kind of meeting they wished for. This was a capitulation which the New England clergy could not permit when this kind of religious excitement accompanied Methodist preachers northward. Not many of the itinerant appointees from the south had the quiet reserve of Rankin; and their arrival in Connecticut and Massachusetts sharply defined their unique ability to arouse, set as it was in uncomfortable contrast to the sedate intellectualism of the Congregational domain. As a chapter in American Methodist expansion it still invites exploration, but the theme, as set forth by Asbury and Lee, will probably remain unchanged: "acceptable preachers on forbidden ground."

The Theological Heritage of the Early Methodist Preachers

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What did the Methodist preachers in America preach? Those preachers, that is, *back then* when Methodism was just beginning, and in the early nineteenth century when it was developing into a large and influential denominational institution? Were the "Fathers" so concerned with "getting members," or keeping up with the westward expansion, or Methodism's institutional soundness that they neglected the enterprise of theological investigation and expression? Theological neglect there has been, but it was not their neglect. Rather it is ours, in not seeking out and coming to terms with Methodism's theological heritage. For there is such a heritage, vast in quantity of writing and subject matter, and significant because of its influence in informing the teaching and preaching of Methodist ministers.

The Beginnings of an Indigenous Theology

The theological heritage of American Methodism began, appropriately enough, with the dissemination of some of the writings of John Wesley. In 1741, the year after it was first published in England, Benjamin Franklin printed Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace"—that vigorous rejoinder to the predestinarian views of George Whitefield.[1] Thereafter a number of Wesley's theological writings or extracts were published and circulated in America: *The Nature and Design of Christianity* in 1744, *The Scripture Doctrine Concerning Predestination, Election and Reprobation* in 1746, *A Dialogue Between a Predestinarian and His Friend* in 1770, and *Thoughts Upon Slavery* in 1774.[2] Even though in these years Wesley's views on certain issues were known to some extent, it was not until the arrival of the Methodist preachers from England, beginning in 1769, and the

1. Frank Baker, *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Divinity School, 1966), #11.

2. *Ibid.*, ##17, 27, 24, and 298 respectively.

formation of societies that the theological content of Methodist preaching began to take more definite form.

The primary emphasis of Methodist theology in this formative period was the doctrine of salvation. In May, 1774, William Duke, one of the early Methodist preachers, in the course of some reflections on a sermon wrote in his "diary": "When I began to speak I found the assistance of the Divine power in a great measure, while a solemn sense of my subject filled my heart, which was these words: 'And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.' "[3] The seeking and attaining of salvation in this life in order to escape punishment in the next, and the way of repentance, faith, conversion and holiness in which salvation is to be sought are central theological motifs in early Methodist preaching.[4] While there are no extensive statements of doctrine by American Methodists prior to 1800, a number of themes receive frequent treatment with the self-conscious intention of remaining faithful to the views of Wesley.

Man is guilty in God's sight, declare many of the early preachers, because of original sin. He is also depraved in nature by inheritance and, in consequence, is actively sinful in heart and life. Of himself, man is unable to merit forgiveness for the guilt of sin, to earn freedom from bondage to sinful nature, or to secure inward and outward holiness.[5] The ministry and death of Jesus Christ is the sufficient meritorious cause for man's pardon from guilt. That atoning work is also the basis on account of which men may, through further gifts of grace, be brought to regeneration—an inner change involving release from bondage to sinful nature and the beginning of a process of becoming inwardly and outwardly holy.[6]

The condition for obtaining this three-fold "first blessing" is com-

3. William Duke, Manuscript Diary, 1774-76. The holograph original is in The Diocesan Library, Peabody Institute, Baltimore, Maryland.

4. See *Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., the Rev. Francis Asbury and Others* (Philadelphia, 1785), pp. 6-8, 13, 20. Also see Thomas Coke, *A Sermon on the Witness of the Spirit. Preached at Baltimore, Before the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, on Sunday, November 4th, 1792* (Philadelphia, 1792); William Duke, "Thoughts on Repentance" (Baltimore, 1789), and Ezekiel Cooper, Manuscript Letter, January 15, 1790, in Garrett Theological Seminary Library.

5. See William Duke, Manuscript Sermon on John 2:15 (1773), in the collection of papers at The Diocesan Library, Peabody Institute, Baltimore, Maryland.

6. See Philip William Otterbein's treatment of the atonement in his 1760 sermon *Die Heilbringende Menschwerdung und der Herliche Sieg Jesu Christi* . . . (Germantown: 1763), in Core, Arthur C., *Philip William Otterbein* (Dayton, Ohio: E. U. B. Church, 1968), pp. 77-90.

plete trust in the total sufficiency of Christ. Through preaching the demands of the law, men may be brought to an inward awareness of their sinful, impotent condition—an awareness which creates anxiety in the face of the knowledge of an inevitably ensuing punishment should they continue in a sinful state. "The law," says Thomas Coke, "is a hammer to break hearts with," a breaking which produces despair and leads to a neutralization of dependence upon self and makes possible the beginning of trust in the merits of Christ alone.[7] Such trust brings pardon for the guilt of sin and a new birth in the soul as the foundation for moral decision and action, and for growth in holiness.[8] In this conversion there is given men by the Spirit "a clear sense and evidence of their pardon and acceptance" with God.[9]

The proper responsibilities of men *before* conversion are the constant and careful attendance on all the means of grace, because through these means convicting, pardoning and renewing grace is mediated.[10] Diligence in these duties, and in all good works, is required also *after* conversion as the means through which sanctifying grace is bestowed, enabling the Christian man to grow in holiness toward the goal of the "second blessing"—the gift of entire sanctification.[11]

This "salvation-theology" with its emphasis on the law, repentance, faith, justification, regeneration, good works and the constant use of the means of grace in pursuit of sanctification is singularly apparent in the homiletical-theological writing of early American Methodism. It has the support, furthermore, of certain of the theological writings of John Wesley as well: particularly his first four volumes of published sermons and the *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (1755) expound at length these same doctrinal motifs. It is important to note the presence and authority of these Wesleyan materials in America.[12] In 1763 Wesley drew up and executed a "Model

7. Thomas Coke, *Sermon on The Witness of the Spirit* (1792), p. 8. See also Marjorie M. Holmes (ed.), *The Life and Diary of John Jeremiah Jacobs, 1757-1839.* (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Duke University, 1941), pp. 211f, 226.

8. See M. M. Holmes (ed.), *The Life and Diary of John Jeremiah Jacobs,* pp. 212-13. See also Ezekiel Cooper, Manuscript Sermon on I Thessalonians 5:19 (1790), in Garrett Theological Seminary Library.

9. Thomas Coke, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

10. M. M. Holmes, *op. cit.*, pp. 211f.

11. Edward Dromgoole, Manuscript Diary for June 26 and July 2, 1784, in the Dromgoole Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library.

12. The first known American printing of Wesley's four volumes of sermons was in 1783. The *Notes* were first published in 1791-92. It is certain, however, that both sermons and *Notes* were available in this country in British editions.

Deed" for all the Methodist Chapels in England, which he published in the "Large Minutes" of 1763. Among other things, this deed restricted the use of these preaching houses to those men who would preach "nothing contrary to the doctrines contained in Mr. Wesley's *Notes Upon the New Testament* and four volumes of sermons."[13] Methodists in America knew this and at the first conference in this country in 1773 minuted in the records their acceptance of this doctrinal authority. The conference of 1781 was more explicit about its position in relation to Wesley's doctrine. The first question in the minutes asks: "What preachers are now determined, after mature consideration, close observation, and earnest prayer, to preach the old Methodist doctrine, and strictly enforce the discipline, as contained in the *Notes*, sermons and minutes published by Mr. Wesley?" This loyalty to Wesleyan standards was re-confirmed at the Spring conference of 1784. The famous Christmas conference of 1784 did not mention this matter, but did approve Wesley's revision of the *Book of Common Prayer*, including twenty-five "Articles of Religion" adapted from the *XXXIX Articles of the Church of England.* In these ways the influence and authority of Wesley's theological emphases were prominent in early American Methodism.

In addition to these standards, there are a number of doctrinal writings which illustrate further both the distinctive nature of early American Methodist theology and Wesley's influence on it. The minutes of the conference of 1785 included three brief sections of theological importance taken from Wesley's "Large Minutes." The first was the account "Of the Rise of Methodism" which underscores the necessity for salvation of striving after holiness, and adds the point that "holiness comes by faith." A second section declares against "antinomianism," but on the positive side, insists on the need for good works before and after justification. The third section "strongly and explicitly" exhorts believers to "go on to perfection" meaning "salvation from all sin, by the love of God and man filling our heart." Such perfection is attainable before death. Beginning with the moment of justification, there may be a gradual "growing in grace, a daily advance in the knowledge and love of God," through man's being watchful against sin, zealous of good works, and punctual in attendance on "all the ordinances of God." But while the process is gradual, the cessation of sin in a believer is instantaneous: "there must be a last moment wherein it does exist,

13. See *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), Vol. VIII, p. 331.

and a first moment wherein it does not." Expectation of this increases the carefulness of the faithful to grow in grace. "Whoever would advance the gradual change in believers should strongly insist on the instantaneous."[14]

Three important doctrinal items intended to portray distinctive Methodist teaching appeared in the enlarged Discipline of 1788: the *XXV Articles of Religion*, together with Wesley's treatises on *The Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, Election and Reprobation*[15] and *Serious Thoughts on the Infallible, Unconditional Perseverance of all that have once experienced Faith in Christ.*[16] The latter two essays were intended as theological answers to certain points of Calvinist doctrine. They present the doctrinal views on crucial issues held and taught by early Methodists.

The treatise on predestination defines that notion as "God's foreappointing obedient believers to salvation," and all "disobedient unbelievers" to damnation. Men are elected to salvation because of faith in and obedience to Christ, and none is elect until he so believes and obeys. The death of Christ is the *cause*, the hearing of the gospel followed by believing and obeying are the *conditions*, of salvation. This work of Christ was not for a chosen few only, but for all mankind. Even though, because of original sin, man once had no freedom or power to do good, God on account of Christ has "restored to mankind a liberty and power to accept of proffered salvation."

If it is understood that through the power given by grace a man is enabled to believe and obey, and thus come to election, the possibility still remains that such a man can "fall-away." This is not the question whether believers commit sins; that they do so "backslide" is taken for granted. The essay on perseverance makes the still stronger point, in opposition to Calvinism, that even those who are "endued with the faith that purifies the heart" may make "shipwreck" of their faith and "so fall from God as to perish everlastingly." It is therefore of critical importance that all believers watch diligently and endure in the faith to the end.

To these statements on the way of salvation was added, in 1789,

14. These three items were retained in the 1787 *Discipline* as sections 1, 16, and 22 respectively.

15. An edition of this treatise had already been published in America in 1746. It is not one of Wesley's original writings, but an extract taken from William Wogan (1678-1758), an Anglican priest and correspondent with John Wesley.

16. The title is an alteration of Wesley's original one: *Serious Thoughts Upon the Perseverance of the Saints.* See Wesley, *Works*, X, 284-298.

Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.* The definition of perfection as the "purity of intention" to love God above all things and all things in God, together with the more detailed treatment of the questions of gradual and instantaneous perfection worked in men by the Spirit, were significant supplements to the brief statement of 1785. The *Discipline* of 1790 included, in addition to the writings already mentioned, an extract "from a late author" entitled *A Treatise on the Nature and Subjects of Christian Baptism.*[17] This marked the first time in American Methodism that a sacramental observance had been singled out for special theological attention. The treatise defined baptism as a washing away of original and actual sin, as a dedication of the baptized person to Christ, and as a means of grace. Its particular concern, however, was to defend the validity of the practice of infant baptism.

All of these tracts remained in the *Discipline* in succeeding editions until 1798 when they were replaced by "explanatory notes" on the *Discipline* composed by bishops Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury. The General Conference of 1800 reversed the situation, omitting the notes and restoring the tracts. In 1808 the Church made a momentous decision: it created a restrictive rule setting up as inviolable the "present existing and established standards of doctrine." The standards thus established included the *Articles of Religion*, Wesley's *Notes* and sermons, and the doctrinal tracts printed in the *Discipline.*[18] Four years later, in 1812, the General Conference decided to remove the doctrinal tracts from the *Discipline*, publishing the former in a separate volume. They approved also the enlargement of the collection of authoritative standards to include other essays by Wesley deemed theologically significant and appropriate.

This new volume was entitled *A Collection of Interesting Tracts, explaining several important points of Scripture Doctrine.* By the time it was published in 1814 the number of items included had grown considerably. Methodist opposition to Calvinism, and its own position on predestination and election, were made overpoweringly clear by the supplementation of the previously published treatises on predestination and perseverance with no less than six additional writings on the same subject. Among these was Wesley's 1740 sermon on

17. The author was Moses Hemmenway. The treatise was first published in Philadelphia in 1788. In 1790 the Rev. John Dickins published a lengthy extract. See Evans microcard #22944.

18. The details of these changes and the fuller history of the doctrinal tracts in the *Disciplines* can be found in Frank Baker, "The Doctrines in the *Discipline*," *Duke Divinity School Review*, 31 (Winter, 1966), pp. 39-55.

"Free Grace," in which he attacks the doctrine of predestination as making God "worse than the devil," and claims that the grace of God is not limited to a few chosen elect. Rather it is freely given to all men, so that all have the possibility of salvation. Included also was Wesley's long essay, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, with its unrelenting arguments that predestination, as the Calvinists view it, is unscriptural; that election to salvation is conditional, based upon faith, and that every man, though fallen, has *some ability* through grace to participate in coming to faith and salvation.[19]

Two other Wesleyan writings were included in the volume. One was his *Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ* in which it is argued that while Christ is the "sole meritorious cause" of man's justification and sanctification, and that while man is in God's sight accounted righteous in Christ because of faith, nevertheless the personal righteousness of Christ is not given to the man of faith in such a way as that he is freed from the law and freed to all ungodliness. The second writing was *A Blow at the Root; or, Christ Stabbed in the House of His Friends.* Wesley here declares that men must not make the righteousness of Christ "a cover for the unrighteousness of man." The faith which works through love is a central emphasis in Christianity and men should not think of this as legalism. They are to show their love to Christ by "keeping his commandments," attending his ordinances, and imitating him in all things.

There is one other tract in the volume—a non-Wesleyan one—which is of importance for understanding the thought of early Methodism. It is entitled *A Plain Definition of Saving Faith.* According to the anonymous author, faith is properly viewed as "believing the saving truth with the heart unto internal, and (as we have opportunity) unto external righteousness." This believing is the "gift of the God of *grace*" in the same way that breathing and moving are "gifts of the God of *nature*." God's gift of free grace partially removes the total blindness which is our legacy from Adam. Free grace also through various agencies or means sends to us the truth, disposes us to perceive and understand it, and blesses us with power to consider, assent, consent, and resolve to believe it. But withal, believing is, with the help of God, our own act. All sinners may, through the "help and power of the general light of Christ's saving grace,"

19. The other essays on this subject include *Serious Considerations concerning the Doctrines of Election and Reprobation*; *Serious Considerations on Absolute Predestination*; *The Consequence Proved*; and *A Dialogue Between a Predestinarian and his Friend.*

receive some truth of the gospel. If they believe that truth, they may go on "from faith to faith" until they attain the goal of salvation.

Some changes and additions were made in the subsequent editions of the *Collection of Interesting Tracts*, but in the main the treatises here discussed were retained. They are significant because they are illustrative of the kind of salvation-theology that characterized early American Methodist preaching.

Asa Shinn: Early Methodist Systematician

By the early nineteenth century American Methodist theology had developed to the point where its authoritative foundations and characteristic doctrinal motifs were clearly identifiable. In 1813 the scholarly Asa Shinn, an itinerant preacher, published a volume which perhaps qualifies him as the first Methodist "systematic" theologian.[20] It is an important book primarily because it stands as the systematic expression of theological views which were present in the official doctrinal standards and which were worked out in the business of itinerant preaching in America. It is important also because it contributed to the further development of Methodist theology, particularly through its influence on such men as Nathan Bangs and Daniel D. Whedon, as well as on countless numbers of preachers.[21]

Shinn begins his *Plan of Salvation* with a declaration of his understanding of the authority and method for determining Christian truth. A basic assumption for him is that man is a being with faculties of conception and reason. Such a rational creature is under necessity "to regulate his belief by evidence and by nothing else." (p. 12) There are three kinds of evidence: (1) the evidence of intuitive certainty which pertains to immediately self-evident truth, such as that I exist; (2) the evidence of reasoning which deduces truth from observable data; and (3) the evidence of revelation in which certain truths are made known to the mind by the "supernatural influence of the Spirit." (p. 54) Truths made known by revelation are accompanied by self-evident conviction in the knower. There are, however, external evidences for the truth of revelation, namely the Scripture records of miracles and prophecy.

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20. Asa Shinn, *An Essay on the Plan of Salvation: in which the Several Sources of Evidence are Examined, and Applied to the Interesting Doctrine of Redemption, in its Relation to the Government and Moral Attributes of the Deity.* (Baltimore: Published by Neal, Wills and Cole, 1813).

21. See, for example, Nathan Bangs, *Errors of Hopkinsianism Detected and Refuted.* (New York: J. C. Totten, 1815), and Daniel D. Whedon, *Freedom of the Will as a Basis of Human Responsibility* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1864).

Scripture is the written account of God's revelations to man. Since it is "impossible for God to be deceived, or to deceive others," the writings of the Old and New Testaments have a "real and true meaning." (p. 60) The revealed will of God in Scripture consists in the doctrines which constitute the meaning of Scripture, not merely in the external letter. It is possible for the human mind to distinguish the essential doctrines of Christianity in the Scriptures when "its faculties are rightly exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." (p. 68) Reasoning is necessary to enable men to perceive and understand the evidence of revelation in Scripture.

On the authority of revelation and by a method of interpretation involving the exercise of reason, Shinn speaks about the fallen condition of mankind and the scripture "plan" of salvation. He accepts the traditional doctrine of the historicity of the adamic fall, viewing Adam as the Divinely appointed *representative* of all, upon whose decisions the welfare of all depended. (p. 292) All men share in the consequences of Adam's disobedience, though *not* in the guilt appertaining to his act. They derive from him a depraved nature prone continually to evil. There is a "native degeneracy" in men that is a "natural consequence" of the Adamic fall. The immediate effect of the fall on Adam was the advent of the inward propensity to sin, and "as the goodness of God spared him to multiply his kind, we are all born in a disordered state because it was impossible for him to propagate any other nature than his own." (p. 298)

The proneness to evil, however, is not itself a sin involving culpability. Sin is a transgression of the law. Insofar as the term "sin" refers to an original corruption, propensity may be called sin, and all infants inherit it. But this original sin does not imply guilt. Guilt is chargeable only on the basis of a man's deserving to suffer, and such deserts apply when one knowingly and willingly transgresses a law which he had the power to keep. (p. 300)

In consequence of the Fall, man has by nature no ability to recover himself. He has not, however, since the Fall been separated from grace. He has not been left in a state of mere nature. The grace of God brings about and maintains personal existence. Further, admitting that man has no natural power to do good, nevertheless such power has been restored to all men through Jesus Christ. Those who abuse this gracious liberty are justly culpable. (p. 331)

The atoning work of Christ is the meritorious cause of man's forgiveness with God and of his ultimate salvation. Because of Christ's perfect obedience God is disposed to pardon man's guilt. It is also

for the sake of Christ that God grants freedom to do good. But if man is to be pardoned for his sins, and his corrupt nature purged and made holy so that salvation can be realized, the fulfillment of certain conditions is necessary. One of those conditions is faith in Jesus Christ. This is the "ground instrument" of pardon, sanctification, and final victory. Saving faith is not mere intellectual assent. (p. 374) It is rather an inward directing of the whole man to God, a "united exercise of the understanding and the affections in the embrace of the Truth." (p. 377) This faith leads man to abandon vice and submit himself "to the gracious government of the Redeemer." (p. 378)

To speak of faith as the "gift of God," for Shinn, means that Jesus Christ as the "object" of faith is God's gift, that the *power* to believe is the gift of God, and that the spiritual influence which assists man in believing is the gift of God. But believing itself, "faithing," is a voluntary act of man's mind and affections. Because of the Divine presence and influence a man can believe when he pleases. (p. 380) When he does submit himself in faith the Holy Spirit comes to indwell him, leading him into all good works and sanctification, and providing assurance of his progress toward salvation.

There may be some question whether this is an accurate representation of the thought of John Wesley on these matters. What it does represent is the way in which American Methodists, in their own historical context, were coming to understand Wesleyanism.

The Theology of Richard Watson

One of the most influential theologians in American Methodism was a British Methodist—Richard Watson. His major work, *Theological Institutes; or A View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity*, first appeared in the United States in the late 1820's.[22] For over fifty years it was to remain standard reading for all Methodist preachers in this country. Unlike John Wesley, Richard Watson was, by intention, a systematic and apologetic theologian. His theological aim was to articulate the essential truths of the Christian faith and, so far as possible, to justify them on rational grounds.

The sole source of Christian doctrine, for Watson, is divine revelation in Scripture. The Scriptures contain a theological system; they are the "revelation of infallible truth." (I, p. 263) But this claim

22. 2 vols. (New York: published by T. Mason and G. Lane, 1829).

of authority has to be justified. The use of reason is essential in order to demonstrate to an increasingly skeptical world that the Scripture and its teaching is true, trustworthy, and therefore authoritative. Accordingly, Watson offers a heavy concentration of various kinds of rational evidence to establish that authority and, along with it, the veracity of Christian doctrine. (I, pp. 70f) Having satisfied himself on that question, Watson turns to the business of exegeting Scripture doctrine. The hermeneutical tools for interpreting revelation are, once again, reason, supplemented by commonsense, tradition, and experience. (I, pp. 96, 263)

The first man Adam, according to Watson, was a "public man," established and considered by God as the representative of the whole race. (II, pp. 51f) Because of this legal relationship, the disobedience of Adam brought consequences not only upon him, but upon all his descendants. There are three principal consequences of the Fall. One is physical death. A second is spiritual death—a condition of alienation from God and the inward reality of a corrupt nature. Man's nature is depraved; he is inwardly disposed to evil. The condition of depravity has come about because the Spirit of God has withdrawn from man. For Watson, depravation is deprivation of the inward presence of the Spirit. The third consequence of the Fall is the possibility of eternal death unless the separation from God is overcome.

The person and work of Jesus Christ, and their relation to man's salvation, are central in Watson's theological understanding. Appealing to the authority of Scripture, Watson asserts and proves the Divinity of Christ on the basis of the testimony to His pre-existence and of the application of Divine titles and attributes to Jesus. From such evidence he concludes that Jesus Christ is the same essence with the Father. (I, pp. 504f) He is also the same essence with man, the two essences being perfectly and fully united.

Watson's view of the atonement indicates the reasons for his concern with the doctrine of the person of Christ. The necessity of the atonement is related, first of all, to God. Because of sin God is alienated from man. Further, God is the ground of all justice and moral order or government in the universe, and these principles require strict enforcement in the face of the evil in the world which threatens to destroy them. For this reason man's injustice and immorality are offensive to God himself, and the maintenance of justice and order requires punitive measures. The law of God cannot be transgressed without some recompense being made. Even if man

never sinned further, this would not suffice as payment for past transgressions. He is still guilty in the sight of God and deserving of punishment. The demands of Divine justice must be satisfied.

The ministry and death of Jesus Christ was such a satisfaction. Only Christ in his divinity could satisfy Divine justice, and in thus overcoming the cause of alienation between God and man re-establish the possibility for pardon. But it was only as fully man that Jesus could perform that obedience and penalty adequate for the satisfaction of justice. In his humanity Jesus took upon himself the humble rank of the guilty, making himself vulnerable to all suffering. The willing sacrifice of Jesus was offered on behalf of mankind and the merit of his suffering was placed to the account of all men. Accepting that substitute penalty, God is now disposed and able to remit the punishment due to all while still maintaining justice and moral government.

If the necessity of atonement is related first of all to God, it is no less related to man. There are, for Watson, benefits of the atoning work of Christ which apply to man in his fallenness. Because of that work man is, as we have seen, delivered from the punishment justly due him. He is also freed from the necessary dominion and pollution of corrupt nature, and is introduced into the favor of God in this world. Further, he is introduced to the promise of happiness in the next world. (II, p. 208) Beyond these benefits, man is given the continual presence and influence of the Holy Spirit to assist him in understanding the gospel and fulfilling the conditions of salvation. The Spirit strives with man to make him aware of his sin, produce a desire for forgiveness, and convert him to God. (II, pp. 211-12)

What this means is that the Spirit of which man had been deprived as a consequence of the Fall is now, in virtue of the atonement, universally and preveniently restored. The restoration of the Spirit is the source of all good desires in man and of an ability to know and choose the good. It is also the source of a measure of freedom through which man is able to respond to grace, leading finally to the reception of justifying faith. (II, pp. 59f) And the man of faith is empowered and strengthened by the Spirit to be obedient in all good works and to grow in that inward and outward holiness requisite for the attainment of salvation.

Conclusion

This statement of the theological heritage of the early Methodist preachers is intended to be descriptive and illustrative. While the

writings and men discussed are perhaps the major expressions of that heritage in the early period, providing insight into the content of Methodist preaching and teaching at that time, they are only part of a large and influential literary tradition extending over the two hundred year history of American Methodism. Many writers could be added to those discussed: James O'Kelly, John Ffirth, Timothy Merritt, Stephen Olin, Wilbur Fisk, Randolph S. Foster, Borden Parker Bowne, Olin A. Curtis. These are only a few of those contributing to this heritage. In 1818 the *Methodist Quarterly Review* began a publication history which continued for well over a century, making available sermons and essays by preachers, teachers and laymen. In all this literature there is contained the evidence of what Methodists believed and taught in the past. As such it indicates the sources from which we sprang, and from which contemporary Methodism may receive some insight into the theological condition of its present as well as the direction of its future.

Methodist Preachers, Slavery and Caste: Types of Social Concern in Antebellum America

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At the Christmas Conference of 1784 in Baltimore when the Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) Church was formally organized, the preachers asked, as John Wesley had done during the first conference in London forty years earlier: "What may we reasonably believe to be God's design in raising up the Preachers called Methodists?" The bold reply was a reaffirmation of the answer first given in 1744: "To reform the Continent, and to spread scriptural Holiness over these lands."[1]

The conviction that national reformation was part of God's design for the Methodist movement reveals that the early American preachers expected to deal with the moral problems of society in fulfilling their divine mission. Their focus was, to be sure, primarily upon an evangelical understanding of Christianity as the answer to the existential plight of individuals burdened with guilt. The preachers convicted men of their sinfulness, proclaimed pardon as God's free gift of grace, and urged growth in holiness by obeying the divine will and increasing love of God and man. This orientation to the Christian life meant that the early Methodists dealt more effectively with sins committed one by one than with collective evils. The Christmas Conference promoted this form of morality by adopting Wesley's General Rules and by adding its own condemnation of "Gossiping, Evil-Speaking, Tale-bearing" and "Love of the world."[2]

1. *Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., the Rev. Francis Asbury and Others, at a Conference, begun in Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, on Monday, the 27th. of December, in the Year 1784. Composing a Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers and Other Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America* (Philadelphia: Cist, 1785), 4.
2. *Ibid.*, 6-7, 11, 26.

But the evidence is clear that the first preachers also believed that a social conscience accompanied a vital Christian faith and that responsible Christianity wrestled with social issues as well as with the conflicting impulses of the human heart. Hence, at the organizing conference they also spoke on social questions like slavery, "Smuggling, buying or selling uncustomed Goods," and "Bribery . . . for voting in any Election."[3] Thus, they laid the basis for a tradition of social concern in American Methodism.

The social problems with which Methodist preachers have been involved over the past two centuries have already been surveyed by denominational historians.[4] As new research is done on religion and social reform in America, a more comprehensive perspective on the complex relation of Methodism and society will be forthcoming. Contributing toward that end, this essay takes one perennial social issue—the racial problem—and offers a critical assessment of varied responses which preachers in the larger Methodist movement made to chattel slavery and racial caste in the antebellum era. In our time under the forms of black power and white backlash, urban riots and demands for reparations, the issue of race has posed new threats to the national community and new dilemmas for white and black Methodists. This analysis explores one angle in the historical background of our contemporary conflict by focusing on ways in which representative preachers interpreted racial relations in the nation and the church prior to the Civil War.

In 1769 when Wesley's preachers, Joseph Pilmoor and Richard Boardman, arrived in America, existing Methodist societies in New York and Maryland already had multiracial memberships. Negroes were often set apart in separate classes and meetings, however, as the new sect conformed to prevailing social distinctions. Nonetheless, the blacks responded enthusiastically to Methodist preaching so that by the end of the century they composed one fifth of the members in the societies.[5]

The real test of the racial policy of the new religious movement came over the issue of American slavery—the system of perpetual

3. *Ibid.*, 11.

4. See especially Richard M. Cameron, *Methodism and Society in Historical Perspective* (New York: Abingdon, 1961) and Wade Crawford Barclay, *Early American Methodism 1769-1844, Vol. II, To Reform the Nation, Part I of History of Methodist Missions* (New York: Board of Missions, 1950).

5. The Minutes for 1799 report 12,115 "coloured members" of the 61,351 Methodists. *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences annually held in America: From 1773-1813 Inclusive* (New York: Hitt & Ware, 1814), I, 226. See also Barclay, II, 52-55.

bondage to which white men subjected African captives and their descendants. The first official response of the Methodist preachers in 1780 revealed that some laymen and clergymen were slaveholders. A conference held in Baltimore condemned lay members "who keep slaves" but only advised emancipation instead of adopting a mandatory rule against all enslavement. Preachers were required to end their ties with slavery, but the problem of enforcing a strict standard, particularly among the local preachers, was difficult.[6] At the regular conference of 1784 the rule requiring ministers to free their slaves was restricted to "the states where the laws admit it." The preachers officially opposed slavery as "contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature . . . , to the dictates of conscience and pure religion," and to the Golden Rule, but their efforts to set and keep an antislavery norm for the church were subverted by concessions to churchmen who owned slaves.[7]

The Christmas Conference marked the first comprehensive effort to deal with the presence of slavery in the church. There the preachers provided for the expulsion of all Methodists who bought or sold slaves. They set a new standard for membership, requiring compliance with a program for gradual emancipation of all bondsmen owned by Methodists.[8] Six months later, reaction against this antislavery stance, particularly in the South, forced suspension of the new legislation, except for the prohibition against buying or selling which had become one of the General Rules. Eleven years passed before another attempt was sponsored to set aright the church's position on slavery.

Meanwhile the practice of making racial distinctions within Methodism produced quasi-independent black churches in Philadelphia in 1787 and in New York in 1796. Responding to the growing numbers of Negroes who attended services, white leaders at St. George's Church in Philadelphia rearranged seating on the main floor to separate the races. Later all blacks were consigned to the gallery. At a Sunday service in November, 1787, Richard Allen (an ex-slave turned preacher), Absalom Jones (also a local preacher) and a layman sat in "white" pews only to be forcibly removed from their knees during the opening prayer. The three men, joined by other Negroes, immediately walked out of the church and later formed a

6. See the Minutes for 1780 and 1783 in *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences*, I, 25-26, 41.

7. Minutes for 1784 in *ibid.*, 46-47.

8. *Minutes of Several Conversations*, 15-17.

new Methodist organization solely for blacks. In 1816 the congregation aligned itself with other Negro Methodist societies to form the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church.[9] The Zion Society's secession from the John Street Church in New York was also partly motivated by Negro reaction to caste distinctions. Again, three local preachers and an exhorter were among those who formed a new society for Negro Methodists. By 1821 a second black denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E. Zion) Church, had grown out of this movement.[10]

Another concerted drive to expel slavery from the M. E. Church came at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1794 and 1795 Bishop Francis Asbury urged southern preachers to sign covenants with him agreeing to disassociate themselves from slavery and seek its removal in church and state.[11] Preachers in the General Conference of 1796 followed Asbury's lead by resurrecting a program of gradual emancipation, which, though less strict than the plan of 1784, sought to put Methodist slave-holding on the road to extinction.[12]

Four years later as Asbury continued to push for a consistent antislavery standard, the General Conference approved a new sociopolitical strategy which directed annual conferences to draw up addresses to state legislatures asking for gradual emancipation.[13] Before this time individual preachers like Bishop Thomas Coke, Ezekiel Cooper, James O'Kelly, Allen and Asbury had tried to influence political decisions and public attitudes affecting slavery, but no national Methodist conference had ever formally advocated direct political action on the issue.[14] The new strategy was embodied in an

9. Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1945), 62-67. Allen was the first active A. M. E. bishop. See *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, To Which Is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Containing a Narrative of the Yellow Fever in the Year of Our Lord 1793. With an Address to the People of Color in the United States* (New York: Abingdon, 1960), 7-8, 24-25, 30-31, 35. Hereafter cited as *Autobiography*.

10. Woodson, 67-73. A similar development took place in 1805 when black members of the Methodist church in Wilmington, Delaware withdrew to form the Union Church of Africans. See Barclay, II, 59.

11. Elmer T. Clark, *et al.*, eds., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury* (New York: Abingdon, 1958), II, 33; "1795 Articles of Agreement amongst the Preachers on Slavery," manuscript in the South Carolina Conference Papers, Wofford College Library. See also Barclay, II, 78-79.

12. *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1796-1836* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1855), I, 22-23.

13. *Ibid.*, 40-41. See Asbury's *Journal*, II, 105, 151, 156.

14. Barclay, II, 64, 68, 74. See O'Kelly, *Essay on Negro-Slavery* (Phila-

address from the General Conference of 1800, signed by three preachers (including Cooper) and the bishops and published for distribution to the annual conferences. The address attacked the institution of slavery both as a deprivation of the natural rights of man and from "the light of the Gospel." Its passage was the last positive antislavery action of a General Conference in the M. E. Church until 1864![15]

Strong opposition in the South and the failure of the annual conferences to carry out the new socio-political attack on slavery marked the general reaction to the Address of 1800. In alarm, the General Assembly of South Carolina enacted stringent laws to prohibit religious meetings among slaves except under closely supervised circumstances. Mobs in Charleston seized and burned copies of the address, manhandled one preacher, George Dougharty, whom they tried to drown under the town pump, and threatened John Harper, another preacher, with violence.[16] In the face of such reaction the preachers cancelled their campaign to petition state legislatures in behalf of legal emancipation. When the ministers gathered for the General Conference of 1804, the retreat from direct action against slavery was fully underway. The rules of the church were again altered to favor the interests of slaveholding. Preachers were asked to "admonish and exhort all slaves to render due obedience to the commands and interests of their respective masters." The rules on slave trading were made so permissive that they nearly contradicted the prohibition against buying and selling contained in the General Rules. The conference made the legislation requiring emancipation apply only as civil laws and "the circumstances of the case" admitted. As a final blow to a uniform ethic against slavery, the preachers approved publication of an expurgated edition of the Discipline without the section of slavery for use in conferences below Virginia.[17]

Four years later, the General Conference made still further concessions. No longer did regulations on slavery pertain to lay members of the church. All attempts to design programs of gradual

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delphia: Prichard & Hall, 1789); Samuel Drew, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D.* (New York: Soule & Mason, 1818), 133-139, 180-184; George A. Phoebus, ed., *Beams of Light on Early Methodism in America* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1887), 316ff. for Cooper's work; Allen's *Autobiography*, 69-76.

15. *Journals of the General Conference*, I, 40-41.

16. Phoebus, ed., *Beams of Light on Early Methodism*, 328-334. Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality 1780-1845* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 19-20.

17. Journals of the General Conference, I, 44, 60. Copies of the two versions of the Discipline for 1804 are in the Rare Book Room of the Perkins Library, Duke University.

emancipation were given up, and annual conferences gained authority to legislate on slave trading. Moreover, the preachers decided to continue printing two editions of the Discipline.[18] Relevant opposition to slavery in the church had been effectively defeated. A year later, Asbury admitted as much when he mused in his journal that perhaps "an *amelioration* in the condition and treatment of slaves [would] have produced more practical good to the poor Africans than any attempt at their *emancipation*." He had decided that the salvation of the slave's soul was more important than his "personal liberty." If Methodist preachers were to have access to the slaves, Asbury reasoned, they would have to work within and at least not directly against the system.[19]

By 1816 Methodist accommodation to the institution of slavery had spawned a mood of surrender and futility. The committee of preachers who reported to the General Conference confessed that "little can be done to abolish a practice so contrary to the principles of moral justice." They regretted "that the evil appears to be past remedy." While they accused some Methodists of being too easily contented with laws "unfriendly to freedom," nevertheless, they argued that the General Conference had no power to change the civil code.[20]

At the end of the first half-century after Wesley's first official preachers came to America, a general pattern of accommodation to slavery and racial caste had been set in the Methodist movement. Occasionally, as vestiges of the antislavery spirit of the Revolutionary era, there were examples of voluntary manumission among Methodists which conflicted with the pattern. But the presence of slaveowners in the membership and ministry of the M. E. Church pointed up to failure to set and enforce an antislavery standard for all Methodists. Two Negro denominations testified to the inability of the societies to practice Christian equality among blacks and whites. The attempt to extirpate the evil of slavery as a social institution in American life had also been frustrated. In its place arose a humanitarian concern for the condition and welfare of the slaves but at the price of acquiescing and sanctioning the system.[21]

The shift in early Methodism from a challenge against the col-

18. *Ibid.*, I, 94.
19. See Asbury's *Journal*, II, 591.
20. *Journals of the General Conference*, I, 169-170.
21. See the writer's article, "Early Methodism and Slavery: The Roots of a Tradition," *The Drew Gateway*, XXXIV (1964), 150-165.

lective structure of slavery to a religious concern for slaves within the system laid the basis for a new understanding of Christian social responsibility. Methodists, North and South, divorced their Christian concern from the demands of justice which required that the institution of slavery be eliminated. The social philosophy which merged with this pattern of social concern was the individualism of the American revival movement. According to that tradition, social change and the solution to social problems depend upon the spiritual regeneration of individuals. Social evils are not overcome by reordering institutional structures but by changing individuals. At the General Conference of 1816 when the demise of antislavery was assured in the church, Bishop William M'Kendree articulated this social philosophy as he addressed the preachers on the mission of Methodism. "We believe God's design in raising up the preachers called Methodists in America, was," he stated, "to reform the continent *by* spreading scriptural holiness over these lands."[22] The bishop transformed the similar statement of the Christmas conference by merging the original two-fold purpose—"to reform the Continent, *and* to spread scriptural holiness over these lands"—to fit a religious orientation which increasingly cultivated private piety and morality but disavowed social and political responsibility.[23] The recovery of the earlier emphasis upon social reformation, as far as the racial problem was concerned, awaited the new antislavery impulse of the 1830's.

During the 1820's there were no frontal attacks against the institution of slavery by white preachers in the Methodist movement. The one exception was the action by clergy in the United Brethren in Christ—a denomination which was actually independent of mainline Methodism. In 1821 the ministers of the small German immigrant church prohibited slavery and demanded emancipation.[24] Among the large majority of Methodist preachers, however, other expressions of social concern replaced direct opposition to slavery. The dominant response built upon Methodism's antislavery failure. It was a conservative coalition of northern and southern preachers who coupled the social orientation of revivalism with a confident view that gradual social progress was inevitable in America. They

22. Robert Paine, *Life and Times of William M'Kendree, bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1893), 262. Emphasis added.

23. Barclay, II, 8.

24. John Lawrence, *History of the United Brethren in Christ* (Dayton: United Brethren Printing Establishment, 1861), II, 143-144.

discouraged all social radicalism which threatened orderly progress. Most bishops, editors, book and tract agents and leading preachers took the position that the evangelical success of Methodism vindicated their conservative social philosophy. The mission of the church was to preach the gospel and save souls. When that mission was fulfilled, in the providence of God, social problems would be solved.[25]

Applied to slavery, there were northern and southern versions of conservative social thought in Methodism. In the South beginning in the late twenties, the social concern of the preachers was manifested in the promotion of a more vigorous program for evangelizing slaves. Preaching to the slaves and their masters became the alternative to preaching against slavery. The most notable "apostle to the slaves" was a South Carolinian, William Capers, but there were other less well known preachers whose ministries were dedicated to Negro bondsmen. They endured ridicule as "nigger preachers" and sometimes risked their own health to carry the gospel to blacks on the rice and cotton plantations.[26]

From the first, the Methodist mission to the slaves functioned as a religious alternative to antislavery, but it was characterized by ambiguity. On the one hand, the missionaries insisted that Negroes, like other men, had immortal souls and that they deserved the right to religious teaching. This recognition of the humanity of the black man conflicted with the omnipresent system of bondage which turned persons into property. But the preachers generally held back from correlating the principle of equality implicit in their religious teaching with social realities. In order to have access to slaves, the Methodists had to assure the owners that their preaching did not promote social revolution and that they held an orthodox attitude toward the peculiar institution. As a result the missionaries mediated a truncated version of Christianity which emphasized "obedience to God, and faithfulness to the interest of [the slave's] earthly master."[27] The religion of the slaves lacked a Christian understanding of human freedom, equality and responsibility. By producing better

25. The most discerning discussion of Methodist social thought in the national period is Milton Bryan Powell, "The Abolitionist Controversy in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840-1864," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1963, chs. I-IV.

26. Donald G. Mathews, "The Methodist Mission to the Slaves, 1829-1844," *Journal of American History*, LI (1965), 615, 618, 622-623.

27. The quotation is from a letter from a white missionary in the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, February 12, 1836, as it appears in *ibid.*, 625.

disciplined and more docile slaves, the Christian faith, thus interpreted in sermons and special catechisms, served the interests of social control within the system of involuntary servitude.[28]

Capers and his colleagues were convinced that piety was more important than the abolition of slavery—that, to use Asbury's word, "amelioration" was more practical than emancipation. But for one factor, this response to slavery would have been only a moral paradox between "a noble effort to give men new life" and "an ignoble effort to keep other men in bondage."[29] The same men, however, who championed the cause of slave missions, including Capers, James O. Andrew and other leading southern preachers, were themselves slaveholders. According to the census of 1850, thirty-four of the forty-seven southern clergymen present at the General Conference of 1844 owned 422 slaves. The link between Methodist slaveholding preachers and the mission to the slaves produced not a paradox, but a moral contradiction.[30]

The enterprise of slave missions became the normative pattern of Christian social concern on racial matters in the antebellum South. Evangelization of the slaves was called "the crowning glory" of southern Methodism by Bishop Andrew whose possession of slaves touched off the sectional controversy in 1844 that led to the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (M. E. Church, South).[31] By the time of the Civil War statistics for the work showed how successful the venture had become. In 1861 when more than $86,000 was appropriated for the program, there were 329 slave missions served by 327 preachers in the southern church.[32]

As a final consequence, the conservative social philosophy of the southern preachers justified Methodism's failure to condemn the institution of slavery. In 1837-1838, preachers in the Georgia and

28. See Joseph R. Washington, Jr., *Black Religion: The Negro and Christianity in the United States* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 193-199. See Capers' *A Catechism for Little Children* (Charleston: Burges, 1833).

29. This is Mathew's conclusion in his "The Methodist Mission to the Slaves," 630-631.

30. Joseph Mitchell has done the creative statistical research on slaveholding interests in southern Methodism in his "Traveling Preacher and Settled Farmer," *Methodist History*, V (1967), 3-14. His findings confirm William Wightman's statement in the *Southern Christian Advocate* of July 26, 1844, that "the Methodist ministry in the Southern Conferences are for the most part slaveholders."

31. Alfred Mann Pierce, *Lest Faith Forget: The Story of Methodism in Georgia* (Atlanta: Georgia Methodist Information, 1951), 78-80.

32. W. P. Harrison, *The Gospel Among the Slaves* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1893), 323, 325.

South Carolina Conferences, for example, declared that slavery was not "a moral evil" but merely "a social and domestic institution . . . with which, as Ministers of Christ, we have nothing to do, further than to ameliorate the condition of the slave, by endeavoring to import to him and his master, the benign influences of the religion of Christ, and aiding both on their way to heaven."[33] On these grounds, the M. E. Church, South gradually removed from its Discipline all legislation having to do with slavery. In 1858 when the preachers repealed the rule against buying and selling which had stood since 1784, the southern bishops rejoiced that the church "at last stands disentangled from this vexed and vexing question, erect upon a scriptural basis. . . . We have surrendered to Caesar the things that are his. . . ."[34]

The pattern of withdrawing from opposition to the institution of slavery in favor of evangelism of masters and slaves within the system culminated in Methodist sanction of human bondage. The preachers' moral admonitions were directed only to the mutual duties of owners and bondsmen.[35] Though the Methodist clergy never officially adopted positive proslavery legislation, as individuals, several eminent southern pastors, including Samuel Dunwody, William Wightman, William A. Smith, Augustus B. Longstreet, Capers and the Methodist Protestant leader, Alexander M'Caine contributed substantially to the southern claim that, as Smith stated in his lectures on the subject, "slavery, *per se*, is right."[36]

Social conservatism among northern Methodist preachers did not differ significantly in rationale from the southern response to slavery. Most northern clergymen uncritically supported the church's

33. *Southern Christian Advocate*, January 5, January 26, 1838.

34. *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, XII (1858), 423.

35. Examples are Holland N. McTyeire in *Duties of Masters to Servants: Three Premium Essays* (Charleston: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1851) and *The Duties of Christian Masters* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1859); and William A. Smith, *Lectures on the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery, As Exhibited in the Institution of Domestic Slavery in the United States: With the Duties of Masters to Slaves* (Nashville: Stevenson & Owen, 1857), 276ff.

36. Smith, *Lectures*, 11. See also Dunwody, *Sermon Upon the Subject of Slavery* (Columbia: Wier, 1837); Longstreet, *Letters on the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, or the Connection of Apostolical Christianity with Slavery* (Charleston: Jenkins, 1845) and *A Voice from the South* (Baltimore: Western Continent Press, 1847); M'Caine, *Slavery Defended from Scripture against the Attacks of the Abolitionists* (Baltimore: Woody, 1842); Harmon L. Smith, "William Capers and William A. Smith: Neglected Advocates of the Pro-Slavery Moral Argument," *Methodist History*, III (1964), 23-32.

expanding mission to the slaves. Moreover, they enthusiastically seized upon the new scheme of African colonization as a way to deal with the problem posed by white prejudice against free Negroes.[37] Motivated partly by the Protestant missionary impulse of the period and partly by prejudice and fears of racial mixture, the colonization idea was, like the mission to the slaves, a contradiction. Clearly many Methodists hoped that through the program of the American Colonization Society (founded 1816) "civilization, science, and Christianity, [would] pour their blessings over a suffering and degraded continent," as Nathan Bangs expressed it in 1824.[38] But Methodist philanthropy was complicated by the belief that blacks and whites could not co-exist in the same society under conditions of freedom. Exportation of Negroes, the preachers reasoned, would circumvent racial strife, prevent amalgamation and end the embarrassment over the slaveowning reputation of democratic America.[39]

The response to slavery among conservative northern churchmen determined the denominational policy of the M. E. Church. Prior to the sectional division in 1844, northern and southern preachers united to crush antislavery sentiment in the councils of the church by yielding to the interests of slaveholding Methodists. At the General Conference of 1840, for example, the preachers approved a resolution declaring that "the simple holding of slaves, or mere ownership of slave property . . . constitutes no legal barrier to the election or ordination of ministers." Answering the British Conference's fraternal address which had called for antislavery action, the bishops stated emphatically that the American preachers had no intention of adopting new rules on the subject. They asserted that it would be "a sore evil to divert Methodism from her proper work of '*spreading Scripture holiness over these lands.*'" The conference also advocated the work of the American Colonization Society and

37. D. D. Whedon, "An Address Delivered before the Middletown Colonization Society, at their Annual Meeting, July 4th, 1834," *Methodist Quarterly Review*, XVII (1835), 129-138; "African Colonization. Address Delivered in Zanesville, Ohio, at the Request of the Colonization Society, July 4, 1830," in *Works of Rev. Leonidas L. Hamline, D.D., Late one of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, ed., F. G. Hibbard (Cincinnati: Hitchcock & Walden, 1871), II, 239-270.

38. "Miscellaneous. American Colonization Society," *Methodist Quarterly Review*, VII (1824), 29-30. See also articles in XIV (1832), 313-334 and XVI (1834), 1-17. The best extensive treatment of Methodist colonization sentiment is Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, ch. IV.

39. For examples of these sentiments see the following articles in the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, IX (1826), 31-35, 178-185; XV (1833), 111-116, 344-357; XVI (1834), 353-359, 412-422.

passed a resolution prohibiting the reception of testimony in church trials from black members in states where Negroes were denied that privilege by law.[40]

Even after the secession of the southern conferences northern Methodists refused to declare all slaveholding sinful or to alter the denomination's ineffective antislavery legislation which had been basically unchanged since 1816. During the final decade before the Civil War northern preachers were increasingly divided over the presence of slaveholding ministers and members in border conferences. But the conservative majority won the crucial battles at the General Conferences of 1856 and 1860, justifying, according to apostolic practice, the inclusion of Christian slaveholders in the church.[41]

After 1845 however, Methodist preachers, even of conservative persuasion, had to come to grips with the reality of slavery and the sectional impasse which grew more critical each year. In the late forties Nathan Bangs turned his attention from theological and ecclesiastical controversy, missionary work, editing church periodicals and writing the history of American Methodism, to address the problem. On the grounds that the whole nation, North and South, was implicated in the system of slavery, he proposed a plan of compensated and gradual emancipation directed by the federal government. His argument, like other similar programs of compensation, was never seriously considered by most Americans. Their states' rights political philosophy and unwillingness to tax themselves to free southern slaves undercut any federal action on the issue. Nevertheless, Bangs' attempt stands out as one response which tried to provide, in the best of the conservative tradition, for orderly change

40. *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Held in the City of Baltimore, 1840* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1856), 59-60, 134-137, 151-157, 159-160, 167-171.

41. Besides numerous articles in the church press, the following illustrate these developments: Gershom F. Cox, *Matter for the Times. Three Questions Answered. What Is Slavery? Were Slaveholders Members of the Apostolic Church? Shall the Church Adopt the Apostolic Standard of Discipline, or Make a New One?* (Boston: Magee, 1856); *Speech of Rev. Henry Slicer Delivered in the General Conference at Indianapolis, 28th May, 1856, on the Subject of the Proposed Change in the Methodist Discipline, Making Non-Slaveholding a Test or Condition of Membership in Said Church* (Washington: Polkinhorn, 1856); Abel Stevens, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church Concerning What Its Next General Conference Should Do on the Question of Slavery* (New York: Trow, 1859). See also Powell, "The Abolitionist Controversy," ch. VI.

and rational solution to the problem of slavery.[42] Other moderately antislavery essays began to appear in the official church publications in the fifties, as Methodist conservatives, along with the rest of their fellow countrymen, were swept into the current of sectional polemics and forced to choose between opposition to and support of slavery.[43]

The one unequivocal response to slavery taken by a minority of Methodist preachers was the radical alternative of Christian abolitionism which cut across moral contradiction and compromise inherent in the conservative position. The fundamental argument of abolitionist churchmen was to define slavery as a sin *per se* regardless of circumstances.[44] Having adopted that principle, Methodist abolitionists struck at the foundation of the slave mission enterprise. They interpreted as irrelevant the social concern of southern preachers who sought to improve the relations of masters and slaves. The institution was wrong in principle, they argued, because, as Orange Scott, the leading Methodist abolitionist in the 1830's, put it, slavery "possesses not one redeeming quality."[45]

Christian abolitionists did not fail to allow, as some historians have wrongly charged, that southern slaveholders, as individuals, might be good, moral men. In fact, their unique ethical contribution was to recognize that good men, North and South, were the bulwarks of the system of slavery. They claimed that northern churchmen, who refused to condemn slaveholding as a sin in itself, and southern conservatives, whose Christian concern was directed toward reforming rather than eliminating the peculiar institution, lent their sanction to an immoral human relationship. Anticipating the social gospel later in the century Christian abolitionists expanded the dimensions of ethical responsibility beyond the boundaries of a private morality and diagnosed the corporate character of evil and the subtle ways that good men become implicated in social wrong.[46]

42. *Emancipation; Its Necessity, and Means of Accomplishment: Calmly Submitted to the Citizens of the United States* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1849).

43. For several years prior to 1852, for example, the *Methodist Quarterly Review* published no articles on slavery, but see the *Review*, XXXIV (1852), 361-382; XXXIX (1857), 260-280, 437-464, 513-542, 634-644; XL (1858), 363-382.

44. See Clifford H. Johnson's "The American Missionary Association, 1846-1861: A Study in Christian Abolitionism," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1957, ch. I.

45. *Zion's Herald*, February 24, 1836, as quoted in Donald G. Mathews, "The Abolitionists on Slavery: The Critique Behind the Social Movement," *Journal of Southern History*, XXXIII (1967), 172.

46. For a very perceptive analysis of abolitionist social thought see Mathew's article, *ibid.*, 163-182.

Methodist abolitionism arose in the early 1830's as one phase of a general societal trend in the North. A decade later, most abolitionists in the M. E. Church withdrew because the conservative coalition in the denomination effectively defeated all antislavery reform in the General Conferences of 1836 and 1840. The seceders organized in 1843 the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America, a new denomination which explicitly prohibited fellowship with slaveholders and those who apologized for slavery. Led by outspoken preachers like Lucius C. Matlack, Luther Lee, Cyrus Prindle and Scott, the Wesleyans had despaired that the M. E. Church could be reformed from within.[47] On the other hand, they did not consider withdrawal from "pro-slavery Church relations" to be sufficient unless a new church was formed on the basis of Christian abolitionism, pledged to the extirpation of slavery from the church and the national life. The eighty Wesleyan preachers, who, with 6,000 laymen, were charter members of the new church thus disagreed with William Lloyd Garrison who demanded secession from all churches and non-participation in politics. The Wesleyans joined religious reformation to political action, and they became leaders in movements like the Liberty, Free Soil and Republican parties.[48]

As they had done before leaving the M. E. Church, the Wesleyan abolitionists united with other radical antislavery churchmen in interdenominational conventions to abolish bondage "on Christian principles and by Christian influences."[49] From the Wesleyan publishing house and independently the preachers issued essays, ser-

47. Scott, *The Grounds of Secession from the M. E. Church* (New York: Prindle, 1848); *Autobiography of the Rev. Luther Lee, D.D.* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1882), 230-246; Matlack, *Narrative of the Anti-slavery Experience of a Minister in the Methodist E. Church, Who Was Twice Rejected by the Philadelphia Annual Conference, And Finally Deprived of License to Preach for Being an Abolitionist* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Thompson, 1845), 22-24.

48. Matlack, for example, was secretary of the Radical Political Abolitionist Convention in 1855. See *Proceedings of the Convention . . . Held at Syracuse, N. Y., June 26th, 27th, and 28th, 1855* (New York: Central Abolition Board, 1855); Matlack, *The History of American Slavery and Methodism* (New York: Matlack, 1849), 266-268; William Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery; A History of the Great Struggle in Both Hemispheres: with a View of the Slavery Question in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Goodell, 1855), 541-555.

49. *The Declaration and Pledge against Slavery, Adopted by the Religious Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at the Marlboro Chapel, Boston, February 23, 1846* (Boston: Devereux & Seaman, 1846); *Minutes of the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention, Assembled April 17th-20th, 1850.* Cincinnati, Ohio (Cincinnati: Ben Franklin Book and Job Rooms, 1850); Goodell, pp. 488-489, 492.

mons and ethical treatises against slavery.[50] In their denominational paper the Wesleyans exposed slaveholding in other churches. One instance came in 1848 when *The True Wesleyan* accused United Brethren in Virginia of permitting slaveowners to remain members in good standing. Bishop J. J. Glossbrenner admitted that there were slaveholders among the Brethren, but he pointed out the difficulties of maintaining an abolitionist standard in the South. Of his fellow Virginians he could only express the hope that "those few isolated cases may yet see their way clear to emancipate those found in their possession."[51]

Gradually abolitionists among the United Brethren followed the example of the Wesleyans. At the General Conference of 1853 they commanded sufficient influence to have the church demand immediate emancipation or expulsion for "twelve cases of legal connection with slavery" among members in Virginia. Two outspoken antislavery preachers, David Edwards and John Lawrence, led the assault. In the church's magazine for children Edwards included something against slavery in every issue. His periodical, *Unity With God and Magazine of Sacred Literature*, also espoused "Immediate abolition of slavery," because "the holding of property in man," the prospectus read, "is sinful, necessarily sinful, under all possible and conceivable circumstances." Lawrence provided antislavery arguments for his fellow preachers, particularly in his book, *The Slavery Question*, which was in its fourth edition by 1857. He took a thoroughly Christian abolitionist viewpoint, requiring "no fellowship with slaveholders," damning the proslavery character of several of the American churches and explaining the political duties of Christians to abolish bondage throughout the whole world. "Individual and na-

50. Lee, *Slavery: A Sin Against God* (Syracuse: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1853); Lee, *Elements of Theology, or an Exposition of the Divine Origin, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1856), 431-479; Lee, *Slavery Examined in the Light of the Bible* (Syracuse: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1855); Edward Smith, *An Inquiry into Scriptural and Ancient Servitude, in Which It Is Shown That Neither Was Chattel Slavery* (Mansfield, Ohio: Western Branch—Book Concern of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America, 1845); George May, *A Sermon on the Connection of the Church with Slavery* (Lowell, Mass.: Stevens, 1845). Cyrus Prindle, *Slavery Illegal. A Sermon, on the Occasion of the Annual Fast, April 12, 1850. Delivered in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Shelburne, Vt.* (Burlington: Tuttle & Stacy, 1850).

51. *The Religious Telescope*, April 5, 1848, as quoted in Dorothy M. Drain, "The United Brethren in Christ and the Slavery Issue," unpublished paper, University of Michigan, May, 1962 (Microfilm copy, E. U. B. Archives, Dayton, Ohio), 13.

tional repentance and reformation only can avert the terrible judgment of an offended God," Lawrence warned, because "God is on the side of the oppressed."[52]

During the final decade of the antebellum era a new generation of Christian abolitionists revived the battle against slavery in two other denominations within the larger Methodist movement. In 1857 Methodist Protestant antislavery men challenged the conservative sectional compromise which had prevailed in that church since its beginning in 1830. They organized a special convention to demand that the church take some antislavery action. In the circular calling for the meeting, two preachers, Ancel H. Bassett and Jonathan M. Flood, exposed "the gloomy record" of Methodist Protestantism on slavery and requested their fellow churchmen to find "some means of relieving [themselves] of a great reproach." A year later the convention reassembled to suspend relations with all "conferences and churches, within the Methodist Protestant Association, as practise or tolerate slaveholding and slave-trading, . . . until the evil of slavery complained of be removed." The delegates also reconstructed the constitution of the church by striking out the word "white" which had always excluded Negroes from official membership and by inserting a declaration of antislavery sentiments. Immediately, the Wesleyans, who had been absorbing Methodist Protestant abolitionists for more than a decade, opened fraternal relations with the new antislavery denomination.[53]

In the M. E. Church during the 1850's abolitionist preachers persistently denounced slavery but they did not persuade their fellow clergy to adopt an uncompromising antislavery rule for the church until 1864. In New York state William Hosmer, editor of the *Northern Christian Advocate,* and Elias Bowen, a presiding elder, led Methodist antislavery forces. Hosmer's stinging attacks cost him his editorial post in 1856, but he immediately inaugurated an inde-

52. *The Slavery Question,* 4th ed. (Dayton: Conference Printing Establishment, 1857), 165, 217, 223; Drain, 16-17, 21; John H. Ness, Jr., *One Hundred Fifty Years. A History of Publishing in the Evangelical United Brethren Church* (Dayton: Board of Publication of the E. U. B. Church, 1966), 321, 336.

53. In 1846, for example, the entire Champlain Conference of 800 members went into the Wesleyan Church. Ancel H. Bassett, *A Concise History of the Methodist Protestant Church, from Its Origin,* 3rd ed. (Pittsburgh: McCracken, 1887), 184-194, 220-221, 226-228; Edward J. Drinkhouse, *History of Methodist Reform Synoptical of General Methodism 1703 to 1898 with Special and Comprehensive Reference to Its Most Salient Exhibition in the History of the Methodist Protestant Church* (Baltimore: Board of Publication of the Methodist Protestant Church, 1899), II, 348, 435-437.

pendent Methodist paper which promoted Christian abolitionism.[54] In 1859, Bowen published abolitionist views which he had preached for several years. A year later, after the M. E. General Conference failed to legislate slavery out of the church, several of his associates withdrew in protest and set up the Free Methodist Church on Christian abolitionist principles.[55] On the southern border other preachers risked their ecclesiastical standing by revealing the extent of slaveholding among ministers and members. In the Philadelphia Conference John D. Long, an ex-slaveholder who had become an abolitionist, was tried for attacking the ministerial character of some of his colleagues whose clandestine connections with slavery he had made public.[56]

In New England Methodism Gilbert Haven was the leading abolitionist. Throughout the pre-war decade he preached politically oriented sermons urging churchmen to Christian social responsibility which required, in his view, that the national government be rescued from the "slave power." Despite criticism for preaching on political questions, Haven interpreted from his pulpit each new development of the sectional conflict which touched on the slavery question.[57] He laid bare the moral complacency of political compromise disguised under appeals to "popular sovereignty." But Haven's abolitionist sermons were more than a religious sanction of the sectional battle. He understood that racial caste was "the cornerstone of American slavery," and that northern racism supported the bondage of black men in the South.[58] More explicitly than some

54. See L. C. Matlack, ed., *Proceedings and Debates of the M. E. General Conference Held in Indianapolis, Ind., 1856* (Syracuse: Matlack, 1856), Appendix, 1-21. Many of Hosmer's editorials ended up in two volumes, *The Higher Law, in its Relations to Civil Government: With Particular Reference to Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law* (Auburn, N. Y.: Derby & Miller, 1852) and *Slavery and the Church* (Auburn, N. Y.: Moses, 1853).

55. Bowen, *Slavery in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Auburn, N. Y.: Moses, 1859) and *History of the Origin of the Free Methodist Church* (Rochester: Roberts, 1871).

56. See his *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State* (Philadelphia: Long, 1857). Two other volumes relate to this controversy. See J. Mayland M'Carter, *Border Methodism and Border Slavery* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1858) and J. S. Lame, *Maryland Slavery and Maryland Chivalry* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1858).

57. For his sermons on the Fugitive Slave Law, the Kansas-Nebraska controversy, Preston Brooks' attack on Charles Sumner, John Brown's raid, and the election of Abraham Lincoln see *National Sermons. Sermons, Speeches and Letters on Slavery and Its War: From the Passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill to the Election of President Grant* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1869).

58. See especially his sermon on "caste" in *ibid.*, 123-152.

abolitionists, Haven articulated an equalitarian viewpoint which was expressed religiously because of "the foundation principle of humanity—the oneness in blood and destiny of the human race" and politically through the Declaration of Independence.[59]

One other distinctive pattern of Methodist social concern over the racial problem can be identified among Negro preachers. The story of black churchmen in the antebellum South has been largely obscured, so that the social response of those slaves who became local preachers and exhorters in Methodist churches can only be inferred. In most cases they demonstrated sufficient obedience and loyalty to their masters to be trusted not to foment rebellion, but it is not impossible that among black Methodists there were slave preachers who worked covertly to undermine the system of bondage. Certainly white South Carolinians linked the African Methodist congregation in Charleston to the Denmark Vesey insurrection in 1822. Later Negro preachers and exhorters were imprisoned for breaking the state's law prohibiting independent meetings among blacks which was passed in the wake of the Vesey affair. Civil suppression virtually destroyed, therefore, the A. M. E. organization for the remainder of the pre-Civil War period.[60]

Negro Methodist churchmen in the free North were naturally antislavery but there were fewer preachers involved directly in the abolitionist crusade than among black Baptist and Presbyterian clergymen. The energies of most Negro Methodists were employed in the successful operation of independent black organizations like the African Methodist denominations whose existence was an implicit protest against white racial attitudes.

The writings of Richard Allen and Daniel Coker against slavery and colonization early set a pattern of black religious protest against racism in America.[61] During the first decade of the new abolitionist

59. *"Te Deum Laudamus." The Cause and the Consequence of the Election of Abraham Lincoln; A Thanksgiving Sermon Delivered in the Harvard St. M. E. Church, Cambridge, Sunday Evening, Nov. 11, 1860* (Boston: Hewes, 1860), 23. See also the writer's study, "Gilbert Haven, Racial Equalitarian," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1969, ch. I.

60. See Vincent Harding's excellent study, "Religion and Resistance among Antebellum Negroes, 1800-1860," in August Meier and E. M. Rudwick, eds., *The Making of Black America* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), I, 179-197 and U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (Baton Rouge, La.: L. S. U. Press, 1966), 420-421.

61. For Allen's antislavery and anti-colonization sentiments see Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (New York: Citadel Press, 1951), 70-71, 104-107. Coker's *A Dialogue Between a Virginian and an African Minister* (Baltimore, 1810) is discussed

thrust of the 1830's two important attacks on slavery and caste which came from black Methodist preachers deserve mention. In 1839 Daniel A. Payne, who had been forced to close his school for free Negroes in South Carolina four years earlier, delivered an impressive speech on slavery before the Franckean Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The recent graduate of Gettysburg Seminary argued that "*American Slavery brutalizes man—destroys his moral agency, and subverts the moral government of God.*" Previously, Payne had decided against becoming an abolitionist lecturer. Instead he turned to organizing a program of systematic education for Negro ministers in the North, particularly through the A. M. E. Church which he joined in 1841 and led as a bishop and educator for the next half-century.[62] His hatred of slavery, however, did not decrease nor his desire of freedom for his enslaved brothers in the South grow dim. Once he expressed his sentiments in a poem written in the pulpit of the Mother Bethel Church in Philadelphia.

> Here let the thunders of thy law resound,
> Its lightnings flash an omnipresent pain
> In tyrants' hearts—till ev'ry slave unbound
> Shall shout for joy; and crush th' oppressor's chain.
> O here let holy freedom speak aloud,
> And freemen plead the cause of freedom's God.[63]

A pastor in the A. M. E. Zion Church, Hosea Easton of Hartford, Connecticut, composed in 1837 one of the most remarkable analyses of the racial problem in America. His treatise dealt with the environmental effects of slavery upon the intellectual capacities of black men. First, he contrasted the culture of Negroes in ancient civilizations with the "intellectual and physical inferiority of the slave population" in America. "The slave system is an unnatural cause," he contended, "and has produced its unnatural effects, as displayed in the deformity of two and a half millions of beings, who have been under its soul-and-body-destroying influence, lineally, for near three hundred years. . . ."[64] Then Easton showed how the

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in Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1891), 90.

62. Douglas C. Stange, ed., "Document: Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne's Protestation of American Slavery," *Journal of Negro History*, v. 52 (1967), 59-62; Payne's *Recollections of Seventy Years* (Nashville: A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1888), chs. IV-VII.

63. "A Sacred Ode," *African Methodist Episcopal Church Magazine*, I (May, 1842), 21-22.

64. *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character and the Civil and Political*

principle of slavery was "the true cause" of "the malignant prejudice of the whites against the blacks" in northern society, evidenced in restricted public accommodations, segregated education, political discrimination and "nigger pews" in white churches. Concluding his essay, Easton appealed to the conscience of white America in behalf of his own "colored people":

> They ask priests and people to withhold no longer their inalienable rights to seek happiness in the sanctuary of God at the same time and place that other Americans seek happiness. They ask statesmen to open the way whereby they, in common with other Americans, may aspire to honor and worth as statesmen—to place their names with other Americans—subject to a draft as jurymen and other functionary appointments, according to their ability. They ask their white American brethren to think of them and treat them as American citizens, and neighbors, and as members of the same American family. They urge their claims in full assurance of their being founded in immutable justice. They ask them from a sense of patriotism . . . [and] from the conviction that God, the judge of all men, will avenge them of their wrongs, unless their claims are speedily granted.[65]

In their official capacities black Methodist preachers voiced their loudest protests against slavery and caste after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850. In 1854 A. M. E. ministers in New England resolved to "wage a life-long and sleepless warfare with the principles of slavery in all its varied forms," confident "in the promises of God to deliver the oppressed nations of earth from the thraldom of sin and slavery, and to establish righteousness and truth, life and liberty, to all the human race."[66] Two years later in an official address the A. M. E. bishops expressly noted that racial caste was "the dark spirit of slavery" in the North which denied "the doctrine of the unity of the human race" and declared "that the man of color is nothing more than the connecting link between the man and the brute."[67]

Ironically, however, even black Methodists were not immune from internal controversy and inconsistency over denominational policies on slavery and caste. In 1853 Bishop Payne stood firmly against discrimination toward a white woman who attended the Bethel

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Condition of the Colored People of the U. States; and the Prejudice Exercised Towards Them (Boston: Knapp, 1837), 8-20, 22, 24.

65. *Ibid.*, 27-36, 49-50.

66. Quoted in Payne's *History*, 307-308. Other examples of anticolonization, anticaste and antislavery action in A. M. E. conferences are given on pages 129-130, 203, 205, 237-239, 250-252, 258-259.

67. *Ibid.*, 329-330.

Church in Philadelphia. The next year the bishop refused to reappoint the pastor after he had expelled the woman on racial grounds. Payne charged that a minister "who would turn away from God's sanctuary any human being on account of color was not fit to have charge of a gang of dogs."[68] A more embarrassing situation developed at the A. M. E. General Conference of 1856 where unexpected testimony produced evidence of occasional examples of slaveholding among members of the black church. Following two days of vigorous debate the preachers called for an enforcement of existing legislation on the subject and rejected the claim that slavery in the apostolic church justified Christian slaveowning in America. They refused, however, to follow the abolitionist minority in the conference and adopt a more strongly worded rule against all ecclesiastical slaveholding.[69]

By the time of the Civil War slavery and racial caste had divided Methodist preachers white and black, North and South, abolitionist and conservative. There was no single pattern of social concern, therefore, but several types of response determined by racial identity and sectional loyalties as well as by Christian ideals. In a few instances Methodist preachers did transcend prevailing racial attitudes and customs. Christian abolitionists like Orange Scott, Gilbert Haven and John Lawrence consistently opposed those northerners who held proslavery sympathies and justified segregation and discrimination against free blacks. They disavowed both the narrowly individualistic ethic of many of their fellow churchmen and the secular perfectionism of abolitionists who opted out of the American political process and withdrew from all churches. Bishop Daniel Payne's stand against racism in the A. M. E. Church was an eloquent witness to Christian equality just as his protest against slavery was a poignant appeal to white churchmen in America. Even proslavery Methodists like William Capers, who insisted that chattel slaves were heirs of salvation and proper subjects of baptism and Christian instruction, stood against some fellow southerners who considered all Negroes as inferior beings below the status of man. The social witness of these prophetic individuals stood out from among their contemporaries and pointed the way to a transracial human community, the realization of which, thus far, has eluded the American people and all their churches.

68. Payne's *Recollections*, 115-117.
69. Payne's *History*, 335-345.

The Methodist Preacher Today: "A New Church for a New World"

W. Kenneth Goodson
Bishop of the Birmingham Area of the United Methodist Church

(An abridgment of an address delivered by Bishop Goodson on 13 June, 1969, at a public rally in Knoxville, Tennessee, during the sessions of the Holston Annual Conference, on the general theme of the United Methodist Church for the quadrennium 1968-1972. Acknowledgments are made to the Rev. Eugene Kirk, who kindly made available the taped record of the address, and to Bishop Goodson, who has examined and approved the text.)

I want to begin with two texts. I think you can do a good sermon with one, but I think tonight I need two—and you can draw your own conclusions. In the New English Bible, in II Corinthians 5:17-18, it says, "When any one is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun. From first to last this has been the work of God. He has reconciled us men to himself through Christ, and he has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation." The second text comes from Revelation 21:5, "He who sat on the throne said, Behold! I am making all things new!"

Opening New Doors

Quadrennial emphases are not new to the life of the Methodist Church, and as a background for what I want to say to you tonight about the current one, let me go back to an experience of thirty years ago when I was the assistant minister of the West Market Street Methodist Church in Greensboro, N. C. It was a large church where an unusually brilliant man was the pastor. I was sent to be, in a sense, his man Friday, but he had an infinitely higher conception of the multiple ministry than the man Friday concept, and out of his great and rich and mature soul there came into my young one some forms of richness which have been unparalleled in my life. We had a church with the Akron plan, and in the pastor's study there were

sliding doors into the wall through which you went into the prayer meeting room—that shows you how old the church was! But the doors were never opened. We had a fine woman working on the staff who sometimes seemed to be unhappy when everything was going all right. One day the minister wanted to go out of his study into the prayer meeting room and down into the educational building, and he pulled back those doors. She came out of the sanctuary about that time, saw them open, and called out in a frightened voice, "Doctor, don't open those doors!" He stood there in perfect amazement—but not for long, for he was never short for words. And he said, "Please tell me why." And she said, "Those doors have never been opened before." And then, I recorded on the side of my mind his words. He said, "My dear woman, a church that is afraid to open doors that have never been opened before isn't going to open much of anything else."

I think that's about what I came to say to you tonight. The church that is afraid to open new doors in the 20th century really doesn't have any significant thing to say in our generation. If all that we really have to say to this distracted, frustrated, and distraught kind of world is, "Don't open that door; it has never been opened before," then there aren't going to be very many people hanging around to find out what it is we've come to do. Bishop Arthur J. Moore, now almost eighty and running around over the Southland preaching, is still saying in a positive, though shaky voice, "If the only thing the Church has got to say in our generation is, 'Hold the fort!' it isn't going to be very long before there isn't any kind of a fort to hold."

Quadrennial Themes

Quadrennial themes are as old almost as the Methodist Church, and I've lived through a great many of them. The first one I remember was in 1944, when there was an ash heap of a world that had been torn asunder by the ravages of war. Against the brokenness of a society when men were trying to say something decent and the Church was trying to say a significant word, the General Conference came out with a slogan. We called it "The Crusade for Christ." Methodism was called upon to raise $25,000,000 to rebuild the broken cisterns of the houses of God around the world and to put the church together again. I remember they gave our little country church down in Anson County, N. C., a quota of $1500. That was pretty good, but being a Methodist I was supposed to think

it was too much, so I planned to see the presiding elder, who at that time was the man under whom I had served as associate pastor. I said, "You've given us too much of a quota." And he said, "You'd better go raise it, or I'll double it!" I knew him pretty well, and I went back and took a layman named Tom Little and we went throughout that whole rural county talking about the thrill of rebuilding a world of love that had been torn to pieces by man's bitterness to his fellow man. We not only raised our $25,000,00; we raised $28,000,000. Out of that first quadrennial interest came the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief (MCOR)—an organization which I believe to be the most significant that American Protestantism contains, serving emergency situations all around the world. Also out of it came the Crusade Scholarship program, a program which will eventually alter and remake the intellectual climate of Africa and Asia.

From 1948-52 we were in a new one; we called it "Advance for Christ and the Church." We started talking about "Advance Specials" (this came out of the minds of Bishop Paul Kern and Bishop Costen J. Harrell). "One Great Hour of Sharing" was introduced to give individuals an opportunity to make personal investment of their means in Kingdom enterprises at home and abroad. From that day to this we have raised $133,000,000 for general and advance specials, $70,000,000 for conference and district specials. We live in the kind of a world that if tonight we were to withdraw our advance specials one-half of the World Division missionaries would have to be withdrawn. Pray God we never shall.

Then we came to the third theme. Do you remember? In 1952-56, we called it "For Christ and the Church." Our aim was to encourage local congregations to re-examine their spiritual and material potential for a more effective and a more extensive Christian witness through the stewardship of possessions, and through youth programs and church extension. Across America we began to strengthen our lines and to extend them, and to do something significant. We were marching under banners: first, "Crusade for Christ," then "Advance for Christ," now "Christ and the Church."

The fourth theme was in 1956-60, when we said, "We will continue to strengthen the local church with an emphasis upon Christian higher education." In that quadrennium and from that day until this we have been able to raise over and above our World Service apportionment more than $150,000,000 for Christian higher education.

The fifth theme, you remember, in 1960-64, was "Jesus Christ is Lord." And we started off across the world with a new emphasis and a new enthusiasm and a new theme. We said, "Jesus Christ is the Lord of our home," and "Jesus Christ is the Lord of our Life." He is the Lord of our mind, He is the Lord of our spirit, He is the Lord of our life. But it was the creed of the first Church. We put it up as a banner, and we moved out across the world.

Then in 1964-68 we came with a sixth quadrennial theme. We called it "One Witness in One World." There were a lot of people who didn't like it. They still liked a divided witness. We began to coin a new word—the "ecumenical movement." I received a letter from a man in a little Alabama community not very far from Birmingham—one of the nicer letters he had written to me. All he said was: "Dear Bishop, Whose idea was the ecumenical movement?" and he just signed under "Sincerely yours" his name. I wrote him back, "Dear John Doe, I didn't. Sincerely yours." But it wasn't the kind of answer that he really wanted, so he wrote another letter: "Dear Bishop, Who did? Sincerely yours." So I thought as long as we were "going steady" through the mail I ought to keep the thing going and I wrote him back the second time, "Dear Mr. Doe, If you've got a copy of the 17th chapter of John, why don't you read it yourself?" It wasn't my idea at all. I didn't think up "One Witness in One World." It was God's idea. And one night against the brokenness of the first century a man sat down and prayed, "That they all might be one." The great phenomenon of 20th century Christendom is that it is now beginning to discover that it can no longer afford the luxury of its own divisions; and the great phenomenon of our day is the emergence of the world Christian community. Some day, please God, we will quit arguing about the World Council of Churches and become involved in its creation. Thus we Methodists came in with this ecumenical thrust. We were one witness. And what was that witness? That Jesus Christ is the Lord of all life. We were living in one world. We didn't really believe we were in one world. I'm not dead sure that we believed it until on Christmas Eve last year three boys happened to be out on a lark, and from 287,000 miles in space they saw what we've been trying to be told all our days, that in the final analysis we're not nearly as big as we might think we are. And we were seen to be, in the words of the poet, as "riders together on the same speedway." And everywhere we went we told it, "One Witness in One World." We talked about personal evangelism and all the things that need

to be done in involving the world in our day in the "nitty-gritty" of its own life. When we came to the end of the quadrennium we had a feeling that whatever else we had done the pattern of American Methodism for the rest of your lifetime and mine had been set.

In 1968 we came with a new theme: "A New Church for a New World." What is this? Only another theme? Somehow or other I have the feeling that this isn't really what it means. If the only thing we are saying is that we have another theme, another banner, another something else under which to march, then may the good Lord forgive us for even being irreligious about the whole business.

A New Church

"A New Church." This has been your merging Annual Conference. You have brought together a community of people in the creation of something new. Across the centuries we have been talking about a new church. What are we talking about now? There was a day in England when Wesley read a letter from those Wesleyan preachers in America, saying, "We're running around over the country converting people, and we don't have any ordained men here to baptize them; and the Baptists and the Presbyterians are taking them in." (It's a practice that hasn't altogether been discontinued.) "We want you to send somebody over here to help us." In 1784 in Lovely Lane, in Baltimore, they got together, and out of the Lovely Lane Chapel there came a new church for the new world. Our fathers rocked along with it until about 1828. Then there were a group of people who believed that there was too much authority vested in the church, even in the bishops (and I believe that neither has that thought been dissipated altogether up till this moment). So they pulled out and said, "We don't really believe that you are giving laymen enough opportunity of expression"—and they were dead right about it. They went down into Baltimore and they organized themselves a new church, and they called it the Methodist Protestant Church, and now Methodism was divided into two sections. We rocked along with the two of us until 1844, or thereabouts, and we came across the greatest social crisis that America has known in the history of all republics. The General Conference looked with great disfavor upon a Georgia bishop, a native of Alabama, and it said, "You can't keep these slaves, even though you have inherited them, and want to free them." There was almost an excommunication, and these southerners pulled out and went on to Louisville where our fathers organized a new church, and called it the Methodist Episcopal

Church, South. And now there were three of us. The first thing that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, did, was to form a commission on Church Union, to find out how they might be able to get home again. For more than 70 years they met annually talking about how we might be able to put the family together again. I remember at the Uniting Conference in 1939 a little man named John M. Moore coming out to meet an even smaller man named James H. Straughn. They called together an even tinier man named Edwin Holt Hughes and they stood in the middle of a platform, put their arms about each other, and repeated the words of the founder of our church: "I declare to you that in all the world the Methodists are one people." It was a new church in a new kind of world.

But all the time there was a group of fellows whose background was as is mine, German and Dutch. They had been to Mr. Asbury away back yonder, more than 150 years ago, and they said to Francis Asbury, "We want to get into the Methodist movement, too." And Mr. Asbury said to them, "We don't have any German-speaking preachers and we can't do this." Reluctantly and sadly they walked away, Philip William Otterbein and Jacob Albright, and they organized themselves into two communions. They stayed apart, because of the language barrier, for almost a century, though they were Wesleyan in their background. They, too, had their problems and their own differences. They, too, longed for unity and dreamed of oneness. A quarter of a century ago followers of Otterbein and Albright united. It was a good union in Wesleyan tradition but it was an inadequate union. Conversations with the Methodist communion continued. Finally in Dallas, Texas, in the spring of 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Church came together for merger to form the United Methodist Church. Today we have a new church for a new world.

A New World

What kind of a place is this new world? First, it is a *small world*. My generation grew up in a large world, except for a privileged few. The other continents of the world were out of our experience. Europe and Asia and Africa were names but not experiences. Today no place on earth is more than 50 hours from the local airport, and modern methods of communication have put a large world into an intimate relationship and we are all neighbors on Main Street. Dra-

matic examples of our nearness to any place can be multiplied without limit.

In the second place, it is a *hungry world.* We live in a world, dear friends, where 68% of the people went to bed hungry tonight, where every two minutes in Biafra a child starves to death, where every single night on this earth 12,000 adults die on the streets from hunger. A friend of mine came out of the hotel at Calcutta at three o'clock in the morning, going out to the airport. He was a little late and came running down the stone steps into the street and stepped over something to get in a cab to go on to the airport. Then he stopped and said, "What was that I stepped over?" He turned around and looked back, and there was a beautiful woman crouched down on the sidewalk, her knees pulled up almost under her chin. There was a little thing in its nakedness sucking from her breast, and couched in the warmth of her lap was another child about three years of age. The panting heart of the mother was losing her last breath. And that night we had a steak. Every night in Calcutta, as soon as the Superintendent of Sanitation comes to his office, they get the trucks and the bulldozers and go out and get the bodies of those who have starved on the streets. Last year they averaged 1122 a night.

It is a small world, and it is a hungry world. In addition to that, it is a *scared world,* and don't you ever doubt it. Bishop Kennedy went down one day to see his friend, Dr. Harold Urey, who is an eminent Professor of Physics in California. This is the man who won the Nobel prize for physics a few years ago. When Jerry got down there he went into the office and said to the secretary, "Where is Professor Urey?" She answered, "In the lab." So he walked down and found Dr. Urey, one of the world's greatest physicists, sitting down and working on some things. He walked up behind him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked, "How's it going?" And that brilliant physicist looked up at him and said, "We're scared to death." That afternoon Dean Rusk and Harold Wilson landed in Berlin for a meeting of the Prime Ministers. When they landed, Maurice de Courville, the Premier of France, was there to meet them, and when Dean Rusk came down the narrow plane steps to the ground and was met by the Premier of France he said, "Mr. Prime Minister, how is it going?" Maurice de Courville replied, "We've got our fingers crossed." We live in a scared world, scared to death; it has its fingers crossed. And it has a wall square down the middle of it. And if all the Church has to say is: "Don't open

that door; we have never done it before," God pity the Church!

Not only is it a small world, not only a hungry world, not only a scared world; it is a *dangerous world.* We live in a society that has enough explosive power at the moment to blow the human family to bits. It's all right that we have the bomb. It wasn't all right when Russia got it. It's horrible that China has it. We aren't scared of the bomb; we are only scared of the hands in which the bomb gets. What have you got to do to get the message through? The 21st century tonight is hanging upon the character of the 20th. There's your problem.

It is a dangerous world in what is happening to young people. I come in and go out of the community at all hours of the day and night. Mine is a crazy type of a job. I came into Birmingham not very long ago, about 3:30 in the morning. Downtown, in a distance of about four blocks, I counted 16 children under 15 years of age. We have three children, and that worried me. So I pulled the car up alongside the curb and called one of those dirty little things. I said, "Come here," and I rolled down the window of the car. He looked at me through eyes that were big and scared, and I said, "Son, what's your name?" He asked, "Who are you?" And I replied, "I am a Methodist preacher and I am on my way home. It's 3:30 in the morning and your mother is worrying about you." "She ain't never," was his response. "How old are you," I asked. He said, "Thirteen." When asked where he lived, he said, "No place." I said, "Your father—I know, for I am a father—is walking the floor tonight wondering where his boy is." "No, he ain't," he answered, "He's out with that woman." When I offered to take him home, he said, "Mister, I ain't going home." And I said, "You know, I'll make you another deal. My little boy is now a big boy, back in North Carolina in his own home. If you get in here and go home with me, I need a boy of thirteen, I'll take you." And he looked down at me through his big eyes, turned around and ran up an alley, into the night. And at Birmingham we decided to put together a night ministry for those 16 kids on the street. We have two preachers who go to work every night at 10 o'clock, and they are supposed to work till very late. You see, we decided to open some doors. If you don't open doors in this day, there isn't going to be anybody left that cares whether you open them or not.

The First Methodist Church in Birmingham is one of the most distinguished pulpits in the South. George R. Stuart was there—we got him from you; Bishop Arthur Moore was elected a bishop from

there; Bishop Paul Hardin was elected a bishop from there; Bishop Angie Smith spent his last year there on his way to Texas; it has been one of the great pulpits of southern Methodism. And if the newspaper advertisements are correct, one of the most questionable night spots in Birmingham is within a hundred yards of that pulpit. The community lives out in suburbia, where I live. But three nights a week, we have a team of laymen to work there, and one of the preachers goes down to that night spot and talks about Jesus Christ. Oh, some people in the church got real mad about it—you know, this isn't the way nice people are supposed to act. So they wanted to withhold World Service—I'm not quite sure I understand the connection, but Alabama is a bit like Tennessee: you don't always have to have a connection to do some of these fool things we do. So they said, "We just don't believe that this is where our preacher ought to be." *Where* do you think he ought to be? Where do you think John Wesley would have been? He heard the same things when he began a movement in the smelly slums of London—to open some doors, when the Church of England had said, "Don't open that door; it has never been opened before!" And if he hadn't opened them, we would never have gotten here. It reminds me of what somebody said when they were going to put a cross in the new church. Carlyle Marney said they were building a new church, and they wanted to put a cross over the altar and somebody said, "My God! Spill all that blood on our new rug!" So we had better not open these doors. We are going to get into trouble.

It's a dangerous world, but it's an *exciting world.* And if you are looking for somebody to come tell you that the Church has about had it, you have got your wrong boy! In all the years I have known the Methodist Church, and I've been a member of it for 52 years, this is the finest chance it has had to be the church. It has a chance to open more doors than any other ecclesiastical organization on earth. If the only thing we can do in the 20th century is argue about the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, God help us! You've got a world on fire, you've got a world hungry, and scared, and upset, and disillusioned. God is looking around to find somebody to be the agent of reconciliation in a world that is coming apart at the seams. And in the middle of that crazy sort of a world Methodism has the boldness to stand and say, "Here am I. Send me."

The Service of Reconciliation

A new church; a new world. But it has to be more than this. It

has to be a new person, in the new church, in the new world. What does he have to have? Two or three things. He has to be more compassionate than he has ever been in his life. He has to be more understanding than he has ever been in his life. He has to be more conscious of the ills and the hurts and the anxieties of men than he has ever been before in his life. He has to be more dedicated than he has ever been before in his life. He has to be more committed than he has ever been before in his life. And if somebody doesn't rise up in the middle of the 20th century America and say to the great dispossessed community of America that we *care*, that we want to do something about it because Christ wanted to do something about it, and if the church doesn't rise up and say this NOW, then five years from now it is going to be too late.

At the height of the racial strife in Alabama, when my mail was averaging about a thousand letters a day, and 900 of them were the sort of letters that should have been investigated, I guess, one night I received a call—about midnight—when I was weary and tired. I had been through this thing for weeks and weeks and weeks, but I got out of bed and went to the phone. On the other end of the line the voice said, "This you, Bishop Goodson?" And I answered, "Yes." He said, "I just wanted to call and say one thing." I said, "What is it?" He said, "I just wanted to call and say that I care."

"I care." What is the Fund for Reconciliation? It is the Methodist Church calling out to the ghetto, it is the Methodist Church calling out to the world parish, it is the Methodist Church calling out to America, "I care." A real crisis exists in America. I know the urban crisis, but there is a growing crisis in the rural church, and in the Methodism of the South, that can break us if we don't do something about it. And the thing I see in the Fund for Reconciliation is the honorable voice of the Methodist Church calling out to a distressed world and saying, "I care; and because I care, I'm going to do something about it." When the General Conference introduced the Fund for Reconciliation, an official of one of the largest churches in the South went to the preacher and said, "Don't you use that word 'reconciliation' again in this pulpit. Where did you get it?" The preacher replied: "It belongs to Jesus; he used it first." Paul Tillich said that the great sin, the great pain, the great sickness of the 20th century is *brokenness*. Reconciliation is a healing of the brokenness. The Fund for Reconciliation isn't a racial fund; it is a fund having to do with broken relationships among people, the rich and the poor, the

black and the white, the city dweller and the man who lives in suburbia.

I have heard that when Carl Sandburg came to the end of his life, the editor of a Richmond paper wanted some last words from him before he died, so he went to Hendersonville. They talked briefly and finally the editor said, "Mr. Sandburg, I have only one more question. What is the saddest word in the English language?" And Carl Sandburg answered, "The saddest word in the English language is 'excluded.'" Left out! Nobody cares!

I want the Methodist Church in the new world to care, to get on with its true business. What are your projects? You can trust your committee to work out your projects. I wish you could have been in one of mine not long ago. We went into an inner city mission in Mobile, Alabama, on a Saturday night, at about 11 o'clock. There was a group of kids in what they called a "halfway house." They were playing pool. When they were told that this was the bishop, they couldn't have been less impressed. That shows you how dumb they were, you know! So they looked up at my wife and said, "Can you shoot pool?" Horrible question to ask the bishop's wife! Except that we happen to have a pool table in our basement. That's an awful confession. She said, "Yes, I can shoot pool." And she scared them when she held the cue stick all right. And then she scared herself when she got the ball in the pocket. Well, I left her shooting pool with that little boy. At five minutes to twelve, we closed the thing and everybody went home. Then when our people opened it up on Monday morning the stuff had been stolen. So we went down and bought a whole new set. And the kids came and played with it. The same little boy came back the next Saturday night. And that Monday morning all the stuff had been stolen. So we bought some more, and opened the place up again. And Saturday night we closed it up, and Monday morning for the third straight time everything had been stolen. And for the fourth time we went back. By this time the owner of the pool hall thought that the Methodist Church was probably the best customer he had in Alabama. We went back and bought some more, and we opened it up a fifth Monday morning, and it was there. Nobody had stolen it. And I said to the preacher, Fred Toland, "How do you account for it?" "Oh, well," he said, "You know the strangest thing happened over the week-end. We knew who was stealing. On Sunday morning as we gathered together across the street for Sunday School, we looked out in the yard, and that kid was standing there." He continued, "I went out and

said good morning to him." He said, "Mr. Toland, would it be all right if I came in?" Would you have said to Mr. Toland, "Don't open that door; it has never been opened before?"

We have a place in Pensacola where I was three or four weeks ago on Saturday night. We call it "The Establishment." It used to be a beerhall in that end of Pensacola and they abandoned the thing because they got tired of it being raided. We rented it and have a boy down there named Carl Carnley who graduated from Boston School of Theology. Carl worked his way through Boston in the inner city and he came down to Pensacola and took charge of the beerhall, and put a sign on the front of it, calling it "The Establishment." They asked me if I wanted to go to The Establishment, and I did, so we went. It's right across the street from the University of West Florida. When we went in, about 100 college students were sitting around the tables and on the floor. There were three kids up front playing guitars, called the Joe Jackson Trio. I was sitting there drinking some hot cider with the kids and in a little while Joe Jackson said, "I understand that *the Establishment* has come into The Establishment and we want to play a hymn for him." They began to play and sing, "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound." Long hair, sure! They played it, not like I would play it; sang it, not like I would sing it. But when it was all over with, I went up and asked them to come to the Annual Conference and play it all over again, every day. Should I say to them, "Don't open those doors; they've never been opened before?"

So the General Conference pledged $500,000 for the Fund for Reconciliation, and the bishops pledged $100,000 for the Fund. The other day the First Methodist Church in Birmingham brought their first pledge card; it was for $11,000. And should I have said, "Take it back; don't open those doors; they have never been opened before?" Well, I heard somebody say, "Behold, I am making—(not 'I have made')—I am making all things new." So tonight we are going to make our pledges here.

I fly in and out of Birmingham a lot. Birmingham, Alabama, at night is the most beautiful city in America. When you are flying into it, it is as if you were flying into heaven. The open face furnaces belching fire to the sky, and the lights that are flickering—a magic city, indeed. Well, one night about a couple of years ago I was taking the midnight plane from Mobile to Birmingham. When we went down the runway I looked around and there wasn't a living soul in the airplane but me. It is the first time Eastern ever ran a flight just

for me! There were two or three stewardesses on it and one of them said to me, "There isn't any one on but you." I said, "The pilot's on, isn't he?"—I wanted to get that thing straight. "Yes," they answered, "he's here." Then I said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. Let's eat up everything that's left." So they went up and got all the Coca-colas and Tab and the sandwiches and came back. We spread them out, and those three stewardesses and I had a time; we cleaned the thing up, too. In a little bit one girl said, "We've got to get ready to go into Birmingham." And I said, "All right." So they went away. In a few minutes one of them came back and said to me, "The captain wondered if you wouldn't like to come up and stand in the cabin door as we go into Birmingham." She said, "You can't get up there with him, but there's a little thing you pull out, and you can sit there. So I went to the door, and pulled that little thing out of the side, and I sat down on it, and said, "I don't see Birmingham," and she said, "It's over yonder against the dark." And I just sat there while we were flying into the dark. And I kept saying to the captain, "Where is it?" He said, "It's against the darkness." And in five minutes, against the darkness, I saw the emerging glare of the city. And I said, "Captain, I'm a Christian. And we are flying against the darkness, beginning to see the light. Would it be all right if I quoted a little Scripture?" He said, "I'm a Christian, too, Bishop." So I quoted what came to my mind: "And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And I saw the holy city emerging out of the darkness, because the church cared. And I said, "Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." And I heard Him say, "I am making all things new." And He never said a word about not opening new doors. And He never will. Amen.

LOOKS at BOOKS

The Journal of Joseph Pilmore, Methodist Itinerant, for the years August 1, 1769 to January 2, 1774. Edited by Frederick E. Maser and Howard T. Maag. Philadelphia, Message Publishing Co. for the Historical Society of the Philadelphia Conference of the United Methodist Church. 262 pp. (Obtainable from the Historical Society at 326 New Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106, price $5.00 in hard covers, $2.00 paper.)

This long-awaited volume was published October 24th, 1969, at a Bicentennial Banquet commemorating the arrival at Gloucester Point, New Jersey, of the first two Methodist itinerant preachers sent by Wesley to America—Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore. On Saturday, October 25th, in connection with the same celebrations, a commemorative monument was unveiled at Gloucester Point.

As Dr. Maser points out in his preface, Joseph Pilmore has seldom been accorded his rightful place in the story of early American Methodism. Richard Boardman was in charge of the tiny but momentous missionary expedition, both men were worthy samples of Wesley's younger lay itinerants, but Pilmore was the better educated and the more able of the two. One reason for Methodist neglect of Pilmore is furnished by the circumstances of his subsequent ministry. He left America in 1774 not only because of the threatening war but as the victim of a whispering campaign implying with insufficient justification that he was "soft" on Methodist discipline. Returning to England he was stationed in British circuits, and then in 1784 passed over (along with other senior preachers) when Wesley listed one hundred men to constitute the legal conference nominated to assume control of Methodism after his death. It is likely that this had much to do with his decision to leave British Methodism and return to his beloved Philadelphia, where in November 1785 he was ordained by Bishop Samuel Seabury a deacon and priest of the Protestant Episcopal Church. He remained in close and friendly touch, however, with Charles Wesley (until his death in 1788) and with the local Methodists in Philadelphia, where he was buried in 1825 at the age of 85. Nevertheless Methodists (in common with those of other denominations) have remained a little suspicious of any man who left their own fold, even though it was for John Wesley's own Anglican church.

Another reason why justice has not been done to Pilmore was the comparative difficulty of securing access to his manuscript journal, and even then of having to wander unaided through hundreds of pages of material fascinating in itself, but possibly not fully related to the main subject of the inquirer's research.

Now both these obstacles have been removed. The journal itself is available at an extremely attractive price, enriched by many explanatory notes by Dr. Maser and Mr. Maag, and with an index of the multitude of persons and places mentioned by Pilmore. (A handful of subjects are also noted in the index, but in general this much more complex task of the index-maker has not been attempted.)

This manuscript journal covers only a brief chapter in the life both of Pilmore himself and of early American Methodism, but it is a formative and most important one. It contains many sidelights on the life of New York and Philadelphia and of their immediate surroundings in the co-

lonial period, and over sixty pages describe Pilmore's itinerant ministry (stretching from the summer of 1772 to that of 1773) in Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. More important still are the glimpses of persons and events both important and incidental in the life of early American Methodism. For most of the period this journal is unique, and it serves both as a supplement and a corrective where it overlaps the later and better known *Journal* of Francis Asbury, and the still later journal of Thomas Rankin.

The volume contains a biographical sketch of Pilmore by Dr. Frank Bateman Stanger, the President of Asbury Theological Seminary, whose unpublished doctoral dissertation was prepared for Temple University, Philadelphia, on this subject. As Dr. Stanger points out, in those days when English spelling was even more fluid than now, Pilmore's name appeared in several different forms, even from his own pen, including the well known "Pilmoor," which some may still prefer. A copy of Pilmore's will is added, transcribed by Dr. Harold C. Koch, and the illustrations include a facsimile page from the manuscript journal and maps of Pilmore's travels.

Dr. Maser and his colleagues in the Historical Society of the Philadelphia Conference have placed all students of Methodist history greatly in their debt, and those readers who are more interested in recapturing the life of two hundred years ago or in the perennial foibles and fancies of human nature will also find here much to fascinate them.

—Frank Baker