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**A History of the
Methodist
Episcopal Church.
Volume I.**

Nathan Bangs



A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Volume I.

Author(s): Bangs, Nathan, D.D.

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Description: Perhaps no one was better suited to provide a written history of the Methodist Episcopal Church than Nathan Bangs. The brilliant, self-educated theologian had not only served as president of Wesleyan University, but he had also volunteered himself as an itinerant preacher in Canada during the War of 1812. Later, he founded the Methodist Missionary Society. Volume One of Bangs' four-volume history serves as a preface of sorts for his more detailed survey of 18th and 19th century Methodism in North America. He documents the life of John Wesley, whose lifetime overlapped with his own, then traces the spread and development of Methodism in Canada and the United States.

Kathleen O'Bannon
CCEL Staff

Subjects: Christian Denominations
Protestantism
Post-Reformation
Other Protestant denominations
Methodism

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A History Of The Methodist Episcopal Church

By Nathan Bangs, D.D.

In Two Volumes

(Later Expanded To Four Volumes — DVM)

VOLUME I - IV

FROM THE YEAR 1766 TO THE YEAR 1840.

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; and thy tabernacles, O Israel,” [Numbers xxiv, 5](#).

“Behold, I send an Angel before thee — beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not. — If thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to thine enemies, and an adversary to thine adversaries,”

[Exod. xxiii, 20–22](#).

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY T. MASON AND G. LANE,

FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

AT THE CONFERENCE OFFICE, 200 MULBERRY-STREET.

J. Collord, Printer.

1839.

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1838, by T. Mason
& G. Lane, in the clerk’s office of the Southern District of New York

Volume I.

Prefatory

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Volume I

From the Year 1766 to the Year 1792

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PREFACE

The following history has been compiled from Wesley's Works, the British and American Minutes of Conferences, Moore's and Watson's Life of the Wesleys, Asbury's Journal, Lee's History of the Methodists, the Life of Dr. Coke, Lee's and Garrettson's Memoirs, Abbott's Life, from historical notices and anecdotes of Methodism found in the Arminian and Methodist Magazines, the Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review, the Christian Advocate and Journal, together with such original anecdotes and historical sketches as I have been able to collect from the lips of living persons.

For the facts contained in the Introduction, I am indebted chiefly to Bancroft's "History of the Colonization of the United States" — a work of rare merit and of incomparable worth to the student of American history — collating it, however, with others who have written upon the same subject. It would have been no less gratifying to me than edifying to the reader, had it been in my power to give a more particular account of the religious state of the colonies from the beginning to about the middle of the eighteenth Century; but the space allowed in a short introduction to the history of one denomination of Christians would not admit of a more ample detail of general facts in relation to that period of our colonial history.

About sixteen years since I commenced writing a "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church," and had actually brought it down to about the year 1810; but the whole manuscript was consumed by the disastrous fire which destroyed our Book Room and its valuable contents in the winter of 1836. Of this casualty I was not apprised until my return from the last General Conference, when, on searching my private desk at home, where I thought it had been deposited, my manuscript was not to be found; and hence the fact was disclosed that it must have been consumed, together with some other documents of a similar character, in the conflagration of our book depository.

It was under the impression that my manuscript was in existence that I asked and obtained liberty of the General Conference, in 1836, to have access to their journals and documents, to enable me to complete my design with the greater accuracy and more in detail. Of this privilege, however, I have not been able to make any use in the present volume, as I can find no journal of the proceedings of any General Conference of an earlier date than the year 1800. But should my life and health be spared to complete my work by adding a second volume, I trust I shall be enabled to enrich it with such extracts from those journals as will be found interesting to the general reader, and particularly to those to whom the affairs of the church may hereafter be committed.

This latter period of our history abounds in materials, while that embraced in the present volume is, in some respects, comparatively barren, as but few of those who were instrumental in planting Methodism in this country have left particular records of their labors and suffer-

ings, with which the page of history might be enriched. The sources, however, whence my information is derived, are of the most authentic character; and I trust it will not be devoid of interest and instruction to those who take pleasure in surveying the stones of our temple, and of comparing its present with its past condition, and of anticipating its future prospects and success. But though the materials for furnishing a very particular history of the early days of Methodism in these United States are comparatively sparse, when viewed in their scattered and insulated condition; yet when carefully collected and put together in consecutive order, they cannot fail to form an interesting and instructive medium of information; and more especially to those whose spiritual welfare is identified with this humble branch of the church of Jesus Christ. This I have endeavored to do, according to the best of my ability, and hope that whatever errors may be detected by the candid and critical reader, they will be attributed to their proper source, and pointed out with that spirit of friendliness which will ensure their correction.

In speaking of the authorities on which I have relied for information in the compilation of this history, I feel it an act of justice to refer particularly to Lee's History of the Methodists, and to Bishop Asbury's Journal, principally because I think they have not been appreciated according to their worth.

Though, considered as a whole, the Journal of Bishop Asbury is somewhat dry and monotonous, on account of its diurnal details of incidents of a private character; yet the historian of Methodism will find it a rich depository of important facts, illustrative of the rise and progress of the work of God in this country; and he will be both delighted and astonished at the immense labors and no little sufferings which this man of God performed and endured in this holy cause. With a view to do justice to his character, I have made Bishop Asbury the principal hero of the narrative, borrowing freely from his journals whatever might tend to throw light upon the subject and to present fairly and fully the active part which he took in the erection of this spiritual building. He was the father of Methodism in this country, and, as such, deserves a conspicuous place in that temple which his own hands contributed so effectually to erect, that his sons in the gospel and successors in the ministry may look to him as an exemplar for their imitation, and be stimulated and strengthened in their work. As to Lee's History, though it might have been more amplified in some particulars, and less minute in others, yet I consider it the most important narrative we have of early Methodism in these United States, and a most valuable textbook for the future historian. Next to Bishop Asbury, Mr. Lee traveled the most extensively through the country, and took an active and important part in the various transactions of the church, both in the Annual and General Conferences, as well as in the field of itinerancy, being a preacher of most indefatigable industry and steady perseverance. And, what enabled him to state the facts which he has recorded in his history with the greatest accuracy, he also kept a daily record of his travels, and marked with the eye of a keen and attentive observer whatever came within the circle

of his observation.¹ Hence many parts of his narrative are made up, particularly those which relate to Methodism in some of the southern states and in New England, from his own knowledge and experience. On him, therefore, I have freely drawn for whatever might tend to answer my main design, in presenting to the reader a faithful history of the rise and progress of the Methodist Episcopal Church in these United States.

In some instances, however, I have found, in collating them, that the printed Minutes and Mr. Lee, particularly in respect to numbers, disagree; and in such cases the preference has always been given to the public and authorized documents of the church.

These remarks have been made in reference to these two authors, not with a view to disparage in the least degree others who have written upon the same subject, but chiefly, as before said, because it is believed that their respective merits have not been duly appreciated. And though Mr. Lee might have been led from some cause to withhold somewhat of that mood of praise which was justly due to Bishop Asbury, on account of which the latter was not well pleased with his history, yet impartial posterity will do justice to them both; and while is awarded to the first historian of American Methodism the merit of collecting and recording facts with fidelity, to Bishop Asbury will be given the praise of having contributed more largely than any one else in this country, and in his day, to the planting, watering, and pruning this tree of righteousness, as well as of having left a faithful record of such events as furnish the historian with materials for his work. To only a small part of this record had Mr. Lee access, as but a small portion of the journals was published until some years after his history was written; and hence the present history has the advantage of its predecessor in being able to incorporate in its pages much valuable information unknown to Mr. Lee. It has also enriched its pages with matter which, though it might have been in existence, was either beyond the reach of the writer, or was not deemed of sufficient importance to demand his attention.

Having thus discharged what I consider an obligation to this greater and lesser light of Methodism, both of whom are now doubtlessly enjoying together the reward of their labors and sufferings in the cause of Christ, I proceed to say, that I hesitated for some time whether or not to refer in the margin to every authority I might quote, or on whom I might draw for the facts embodied in the history, or merely to make a general reference, as is done in the commencement of this preface. As such perpetual references would considerably swell the body of the work, without adding any thing to the stock of information, or to the authenticity of the facts detailed, it was thought most advisable to adopt the latter course. In most instances, however, when any important matter is introduced into the thread of the narrative, or the language of others has been used, due credit has been given by a reference

¹ His manuscript journals, which were quite voluminous, were also consumed by the burning of the Book Room.

to the proper authority. That the blessing of God may accompany this effort to trace his providence and grace in his watch-care over this branch of his church, and that it may continue to be showered abundantly upon his heritage, until his “dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth,” the author would unite his fervent prayers with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

N. Bangs. New York, July 14, 1838.

INTRODUCTION

Sketches of the first settlements in North America; its discovery; Florida the first settlement made on the continent, Virginia next, in 1607; landing of the Pilgrims; New Hampshire, 1623; Maryland 1634; Rhode Island, 1636; Connecticut; New York, 1615; Delaware, 1631; New Jersey, 1664; North Carolina, 1660; South Carolina, 1670; Pennsylvania, first visited by Penn in 1682; Georgia, 1733; Vermont, 1744; general character of the colonists; motives by which they were actuated; and effect of their conduct; object of this sketch; general state of the colonies in the 17th century; efforts to convert the Indians; general state of religion and morals; tribute of respect to New England; pure religion rather low; Whitefield's labors, and their effects; state of religion in Virginia; in the middle provinces; in the southern; general state of things about the middle of the 18th century; favorable to missionary effort; Slavery in the colonies; historical sketch of slavery; its introduction into the colonies; object of these remarks; proper divisions of the history.

In presenting a history of this denomination of Christians to the reader, it seems proper to introduce it by a few historical sketches of the first settlements of the country, accompanied with an account of the civil and religious state of the people at the time Methodism was introduced.

The discovery of America by Columbus in 1492,² awakened a spirit of bold and adventurous enterprise in Europe to which the minds of men heretofore had been strangers, and gave

2 The reader is doubtless aware that the first discovery of America has been attributed to the Norwegians, by whom Iceland was peopled. It seems indeed indisputable, especially from the documents which have been recently brought to light by "The Royal Society of Northern Antiquarians," that as early as 986 Greenland was discovered by a company of Norwegians from Iceland, and a settlement effected there by emigrants from that place. And it is equally true, by the same authority, that these persons, assisted by some of their countrymen from Norway, from the year 1000 and onward to near the close of the 13th century, discovered various portions of the coast of North America, from Nova Scotia along down as far south as the Chesapeake Bay, if not even as Florida. It seems also that landings were made at a number of places, and a traffic carried on for short seasons with the natives. But it is equally certain that no permanent settlements were made, nor any right acquired to the soil from the aboriginal inhabitants. Whether Columbus had any knowledge of these facts, as some contend, or not, it is certain that he struck out a new path for the discovery of this western world, inasmuch as the Norwegians came across from one of the most northern kingdoms of Europe Iceland, and probably never dreamed of a connection between America and the south of Europe in the direction taken by Columbus. Nor were there, so far as has been discovered, the least traces of civilization on the northern coast of America when taken possession of by Europeans in the 16th century. The adventures of Columbus, therefore, and his immediate followers, had all the characteristics of original enterprise, and of priority in discovery, as much so as if the eye of civilized man had never before beheld the western continent.

them an impulse in quite a new direction. The impetus thus given to European adventure received a fresh impulse by the discovery of the northern continent of the new world, by John and Sebastian Cabot, father and son, in 1497, only five years after the intrepid Columbus had solved the problem respecting the existence of a western hemisphere.

Within the boundaries of these United States the first permanent settlement was made by the Spaniards; for though the Cabots were the first to discover the continent, and Columbus the first European who set foot on the islands bordering upon the American coast, it is manifest that no permanent settlement was made on the continent until it was effected by Melendez, who took possession of Florida September 7, in 1565, in the name of his master, Philip II., king of Spain, and on the next day laid the foundation of the town of St. Augustine, deriving the name from the saint on whose day he came upon the coast.

After many ineffectual attempts by Sir Walter Raleigh, a statesman uniting in himself the qualities of a philosopher, a Christian, and a hero, to found a settlement in Virginia, at a place now within the bounds of North Carolina, May 13, 1607, forty-one years after the foundation for St. Augustine was laid, the colony was founded at Jamestown, on James River; the river and town being named in honor of the sovereign, James I. of England, under whose auspices the enterprise was planned and executed. In the charter granted to this colony, it was stipulated that religion should be established according to the doctrines and ritual of the Church of England; and so it continued until after the independence of the United States was achieved.

The next settlement was made by the "pilgrims," who, after a tedious voyage, and many perilous escapes, landed on the Plymouth Rock, on Monday, December 11, 1620. This was the foundation of the colonies of New England; and it was made by a company of bold, independent, religious adventurers, who fled from persecution in the old, to seek an asylum of religious liberty in the new world.

From this small beginning the state of Massachusetts dates its origin. These pilgrims had imbibed the principles of Congregationalism, and hence this system became, in the growth of the colony, the established, and, in some respects, the intolerant religion of the land; and, with some mitigation in the eternal of its principles, which grew out of the improvements of the times and the progress of civil and religious liberty, remained so until some time after the revolution had effected the independence of these United States.

In 1623 settlements were established on the banks of the Piscataqua River, and Portsmouth and Dover are among the oldest towns in New England. These were included in the grant made to those who afterward were instrumental in rearing the state of New Hampshire, in which the same religious principles predominated that characterized Massachusetts.

In 1634 the colony of Maryland was settled by Mr. Calvert, a descendant of Lord Baltimore. May 27th of this year Mr. Calvert founded the village of St. Mary's, situated on the river of the same name. Though a Roman Catholic, yet, witnessing the intolerant spirit which reigned

at home, and also pervaded to some extent the colonies in the new world, he was careful to provide for the free exercise of religion under his chartered rights: and thus a Roman Catholic, adhering to a system of religion justly considered the most intolerant of all the modifications of Christianity extant, had the honor of exhibiting to the savages and settlers of this western world the first example of religious freedom. And among all the colonies, none, except that of Rhode Island, were more strenuous asserters of civil and religious freedom, as exhibited in a truly republican government, than were the first settlers of Maryland.

The next founder of a pure religious republic was Roger Williams. After suffering various persecutions from the magistrates of Massachusetts, for the bold, Scriptural, and rational manner in which he asserted and vindicated the principles of civil and religious liberty, he became a voluntary exile from the colony to which he had come to avoid religious persecution at home, and, in company with five companions, landed at a place in the wilderness which he called, as a pious memento of the goodness of God toward him and his fellow exiles, Providence, affirming in the fullness of his heart, "I desired it might be for shelter for persons distressed in conscience." This happened in June, 1636, was the beginning of the colony of Rhode Island, As it was a love of religious freedom which led to the settlement of the colony, so it has ever continued to be distinguished by this excellent trait of the Christian character. From the colony of Massachusetts, Connecticut received its first emigrants; and, in 1661, under the government of the estimable Winthrop, the new settlements of Hartford and New Haven, hitherto independent of each other, became united under one charter — a charter which guarantied to them the rights of conscience and the blessings of civil liberty. As the settlers of this part of the country were the like hardy sons of the puritans with those who built up the Colonies of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, so they established for themselves similar regulations in respect to religion and morals, distinguished by a rigid adherence to the Scriptures, as interpreted and applied by the Congregationalists. Though less severe toward other sectarists than their elder brethren, yet they were exclusive in their views of church order and discipline, and so remained even after the tree of liberty had succeeded the pillar of royalty.

As early as 1615, six years after Hudson entered the noble river which bears his name, a settlement was begun by the Dutch on Manhattan Island, (now New York,) and probably in the same year at Albany. The political and religious disputes with which the states of Holland were agitated at that time, very much retarded the progress of the infant settlement in this colony. These having in a measure subsided, soon after, through the agency of the Dutch West India Company, the work of colonization went forward more prosperously, and New York soon took its destined place among American colonies, as one of the stars which was to illuminate this Western hemisphere. As traffic, not religion, nor civil liberty, led to the first settlement of this portion of our country, it was not only slow in its progress,

but indistinguishable for any other religious or civil character than that which pervaded the institutions of Holland. They were Protestants of the Calvinistic school, and aristocratic in their civil institutions. The progress of events, however, introduced various sects into the province, subject to those restrictions which the colonial legislature saw fit to impose.

In 1631 the state of Delaware received its first emigrants from Holland, under the guardianship of De Vries, who established themselves near the site of Lewistown. These were under the influence of the same principles with those who had taken possession of New York. It afterward, in the year 1638, received an accession of emigrants from Sweden, who formed a settlement near the mouth of Christiana Creek. Of the religious state of this colony little is known, only that, when they sailed, they were provided with a religious teacher. The Reformation, however, had already taken firm hold of Sweden, and hence we may presume that Protestantism was early interwoven in their civil compact.

In 1664 New Jersey received a separate and independent colonial existence. Before this period it had been claimed both by the Dutch, Swedes, and English, and the settlers were from each of these nations, most of whom were from the older colonies which had established on the continent. The charter by which the people held their rights contained the seeds civil and religious liberty, and all claimed the right of worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences. What was called "West New Jersey," was first settled by the Quakers, who established themselves on the east bank of the Delaware River, and founded the town of Burlington in 1677.

About the year 1660 North Carolina was colonized. It was first peopled by some adventurous emigrants from New England and Virginia, by whom, however, it was soon abandoned, on account of the rigorous measures adopted by the wealthy proprietors, to whom the country was granted by King Charles II. Unlike most of the other colonies, this appears to have been undertaken by its original proprietors for the sake of improving their fortune; but so widely had the seeds of civil and religious liberty been sown in the American soil, that it was extremely difficult, if indeed not impossible, to plant any colony here, with a prospect of success, without the nutriment of rational liberty. Accordingly, the proprietors were compelled to yield to the spirit of the times, and grant to the settlers of North Carolina the liberty of self-government; and, in the language of the historian of those times, "the shield of ecclesiastical oppression was swathed in independence." Then were they enabled to take a stand among the sister colonies, as another star in the bright constellation which began to shed a luster in this western hemisphere.

In 1670 South Carolina was founded, and the first settlement was made on the banks of Ashley River, of which, however, nothing now remains to mark the spot, except the line of a moat which served for a defense against the natives. This colony, resisting the attempts which were made by the proprietaries to establish a despotic government, was established on the basis of republican liberty, by which the rights of conscience were guaranteed to the

colonists. The first permanent settlement was made on a neck of land called Oyster Point, now the city of Charleston, in 1673. The principles of religion were early incorporated in the civil institutions of South Carolina, granting to all sects the liberty of worshipping God in the manner most agreeable to themselves, and the colony was enriched by many of those pious and persecuted Huguenots, who fled from the intolerance of the bigoted Louis XIV., whose troubled conscience played easily into the hands of his stern and more bigoted advisers. The colony of Pennsylvania was first settled by Quakers, chiefly emigrants from West Jersey. But in 1682 William Penn himself arrived in the Delaware, and landed at Newcastle, on the western bank of that noble river, where he found a company of Swedes, Dutch, and English, to welcome his approach. In Chester he found a few of his honest followers. In the early part of the month of November he landed at the site of Philadelphia; and the next year he formed the grand treaty with the Indians beneath the shade of a lofty elm, by which they mutually bound themselves in a perpetual covenant of peace and friendship. As the emigrants who founded this colony were voluntary exiles from religious persecution in England, and were guided by an unconquerable love of liberty, they took care to guaranty to all the rights of conscience, and to guard, in the most sacred manner, the original interests of the aboriginals of the country. And it is due to historic truth to say, that William Penn surpassed all his competitors in his strict adherence to the terms of the treaty with the Indians, and in commanding their respect and confidence. The name which was given to the colony, Pennsylvania, (Penn's Woods,) indicated his own right in the soil, a right secured by a double purchase, first from his king, and secondly from the natives, while the name given to the city (Philadelphia, meaning brotherly love) served as a memento of the sacred principle which bound them together as a band of brothers. I need hardly add that this state has ever been distinguished for its stern adherence to those principles of liberty and equality by which it was first bound together.

The colony of Georgia was established in 1733, under the patronage of General Oglethorpe, chiefly by members of the Church of England. In 1736 the colony was visited by the Rev. Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, at the request of the trustees and governor of the colony, as missionaries to the Cherokee Indians. Here, also, the principles of civil and religious freedom were interwoven into their institutions, and have since guided their legislature in their civil enactments.

Settlements were made in Vermont between the years 1744 and 1749. The oldest town, Bennington, was chartered in the latter year. In 1777, a constitution, plain and simple in its provisions, and the most democratic of any of the states in the union in its principles, was formed and adopted. Under this instrument the rights of conscience are secured alike; to all the citizens of the state, though the original settlers were principally of the Congregational order, being emigrants from the older New England states. Here, therefore, religious freedom is enjoyed without any legal restraint, and all denominations sit quietly "under their own

vines and fig-trees,” enjoying the fruits of their industry and the blessings of a gospel ministry. This account of the first settlement of our country has been given for the purpose of showing the materials out of which our republic was gradually framed; and though they were somewhat heterogeneous in their character, coming from different states and kingdoms of Europe, speaking a variety of languages, habituated to divers laws and usages, and professing different forms of Christianity, they were all strongly imbued with the principles of civil and religious liberty; and though some of the original projectors of the schemes of American colonization were actuated by motives of avarice, and the proprietaries of the lands were possessed strongly with aristocratic and baronial feelings and views, they were resisted by the colonists themselves as adopting principles and pursuing measures incompatible with their rights as freemen: while most of those who embarked in this grand enterprise were led to it from a dread of the persecution to which they were exposed at home, and a desire to obtain that liberty of conscience in religious matters which God, the Holy Scriptures, and the fitness of things proclaim and sanction as the birthright of all rational beings. Hence the cheerfulness with which they submitted to the disfranchisement of their rights as subjects of their respective governments in their own countries, the patience and perseverance with which they bore their privations and hardships “as strangers and pilgrims” in the howling wilderness,” among savages, wolves, and tigers, as well as the facility and determination with which they resisted all encroachments upon their chartered rights as Christians and freemen, and finally succeeded in establishing their independence on a broad, and as we humbly hope, an enduring foundation.

For though these people came from a land where monarchy reigned, and aristocracy triumphed over the liberties of the many, and some of them from countries where high-toned episcopacy, priding itself in its hereditary exclusive powers and privileges, had asserted the divinity of its origin; yet neither the monarchy nor the aristocracy, nor yet the episcopacy emigrated; neither a monarch, bishop, nor archbishop ever trod the North American soil! Enjoying their emoluments at home, and living in luxurious indolence on their own ample patrimonies in the bosom of their friends, protecting and being protected by each other, these hereditary lords of the soil and of the church were content to let the people seek an asylum from their oppression where alone they could enjoy those blessings for which they in vain sighed, and sought, and prayed in their own country. They were the people, therefore, and not their oppressive rulers, aided, indeed, in some instances, by a few high-minded and philanthropic spirits, who could claim kindred with “high blood” who emigrated to these shores. Galled and oppressed at home, they fled for refuge to this savage wilderness. And having thus fled, and established themselves in little independent communities, where they could enjoy the sweets of liberty, they were not to be deprived of this, their second life, without a struggle. And though in a few instances some of them transcended their original rights by an attempt to exclude others from participating in the privileges which they justly

claimed for themselves, and thus exhibited an inconsistency to which human nature is remarkably prone, yet all these things were so overruled by a benignant Providence, that they eventuated, in conjunction with other causes which were at work simultaneously with these, and which lay deeply imbedded in the human heart, in the total overthrow of civil and religious despotism in this country, and the final establishment of a Scriptural and rational liberty, with which generations of men have been blessed, and which shall continue to pour its blessings upon generations yet unborn. Yes — the undying truths which were elicited from mind by the settlement of America are destined to that immortality which shall live and flourish until time shall be no more. For though the fabric which they have contributed to raise should, by the folly and wickedness of men, be crumbled to the dust, these truths shall never die — shall never be forgotten; but shall live in the page of history, in the song of the poet, and shall flash and blazon from the eloquent tongue of the statesman, the jurist, and the advocate of Christianity, so long as mind remains free to act. And more than all — that Christianity which is destined to “cover the earth as the waters cover the great deep,” shall diffuse these sacred truths over the wide earth, and transmit them, in all their freshness and luster, from generation to generation, until time shall resign its records to eternity!

It cannot be accepted, nor even allowed, that I should attempt any thing like a history of the progress of the settlements of our continent in this brief introduction. Nothing more, therefore, is intended than such a cursory glance at things as is necessary to show the state of the country at the time Methodism was planted on these shores. A few general remarks, therefore, on the progress of the settlements and the general state of society only can be expected.

It seems from the history of these times that, about the year 1686, attempts were made by the governor of New York to reduce all the colonies under his sway, and thus to introduce a despotism into the new, as hateful to its free-born inhabitants as was the tyranny from which they had fled in the old world; but the happy revolution which was effected in England in 1688, by the crowning of William, prince of Orange, king of Great Britain, was soon felt throughout the American colonies; and acting under the influence of this general pulsation of liberty, they resisted the tyranny of Andros and his party, proclaimed William and Mary, their Protestant sovereigns, and ceased not their efforts until they fully regained their chartered rights. Thus the spirit of liberty, which emigrated with the pilgrims and their compatriots, rose victorious over all opposition, and prepared for itself a habitation in these western wilds. At this memorable era, Providence had so ordered matters that the colonies hitherto claimed by several European powers were all united under the jurisdiction of Great Britain. At this time, the number of inhabitants in the several provinces is computed to be about 200,000, all imbued with the spirit of liberty and many of them actuated by the purest principles of Christianity. It is true, that as the number of inhabitants increased, and the means of enjoyment were multiplied, vicious indulgence corrupted the minds a morals of

many; and the spirit of avarice, mingling in their councils, led to those infringements upon the rights of the aboriginal tribes which tended to provoke and irritate them, until acts of barbarous retaliation produced mutual hatred and sanguinary conflicts, often to the destruction of whole villages of white people, and the extermination of Indian tribes. These bloody wars, while they tended to an alienation of affection between the colonists and the savages, had a deleterious influence upon the interests of pure religion, as they must have awakened an animosity toward each other incompatible with that benign religion which breathes naught but good will toward mankind.

It is but justice, however, to remark, that our pilgrim fathers were by no means unmindful of the moral and spiritual interests of the aborigines of the country. As early as the year 1646 measures were adopted by the general court of Massachusetts for the conversion of the natives; and the Rev John Eliot, justly styled the apostle to the Indians, undertook to carry the benevolent object into execution. Such was the success attending his labors, and those who aided and followed him, that in the several towns of New England there were, in 1696, no less than thirty Indian churches. In later times, namely, in 1744, the Indian settlement at the forks of the Delaware was visited by the pious and indefatigable Brainerd, whose evangelical labors were blessed to the conversion of numbers of these children of the desert. About the same time, the Moravians established missions among several of the North American Indians; and they have continued them with various degrees of success until this day. But though some vestiges of these primitive labors remain to the present time, the wars with the natives, particularly those with the famous chief King Philip, in 1675 and 1676, nearly extinguished the flame of missionary ardor which began to enlighten and warm the wigwams of the Indians, and spread a dark gloom over those bright prospects which had appeared in this western hemisphere; and as these children of the forests gradually receded from the sun of civilization into the trackless wilderness, they forgot the instructions of the Christian missionary, and plunged deeper and deeper into the mire of heathenism. Recent efforts, however, for their conversion give the Christian philanthropist hopes of their future reclamation to the blessings of Christianity and civilization.

In respect to the general state of religion and morals in the colonies from the memorable revolution alluded to in 1688, it is not possible to enter into details, even were authentic documents at hand, in the limits allotted to this introduction. In the New England colonies, however, the institutions of the gospel were amply provided for by law; for those pious pilgrims who first peopled that part of the country, secured, by legal enactments, the ministry and ordinances of the gospel for every parish in the country; and though, in some instances, at particular times, they betrayed an intolerant spirit, particularly in Massachusetts, toward the Quakers and other sectarists, they generally exemplified a strong attachment to the interests of Christianity, preaching and enforcing its truths among the people. While, therefore, we may shed a tear over those weaknesses which led to the persecution of the Quakers, and

those superstitions which dictated the sanguinary measures for the extirpation of witchcraft, by the people of Massachusetts, we must at the same time admire that inflexibility of purpose with which they maintained the institutions of the gospel, and the wisdom and zeal they displayed in the Christian education of their youth. Churches, school houses, ministers, and teachers were generally provided in every town and parish throughout the country. New England, therefore, may be considered, in some sense, as the nursery of religion and morals in these United States.

Notwithstanding, however, those provisions in favor of the ordinances of Christianity, I believe it may be said, without any unjust disparagement of their character, that, at the time Methodism was introduced, experimental and practical religion was at a low ebb even in the New England provinces. Some portions of the country had, to be sure, been visited from time to time with revivals of religion; but it is an evidence of the low state of religion and morals to know that these had provoked powerful opposition, even from the very congregations among whom they commenced. What pious and enlightened mind does not feel emotions of sorrow at the recollection of the melancholy fact that the Rev. Jonathan Edwards was compelled to leave his ministerial charge at Northampton, because he so zealously enforced the doctrines and morality of the gospel upon the youth of his congregation! He, however, and those who acted with him in his gospel labors, were instrumental in reviving experimental godliness to a considerable extent in the congregational churches of New England.

About the same time that these men of God were striving to revive the spirit of primitive Christianity in the hearts and lives of the people, the country was blessed with the labors of the pious and gifted Whitefield. His powerful voice was heard, in accents of evangelical warning, instruction, and entreaty, from Georgia, all along the coast, in the cities and villages through the New England provinces, to the extreme settlements of our northern and eastern frontiers. Nor did he speak in vain. The fire of evangelical love was kindled in many hearts in the several places which he visited. But he was like a blazing comet. Though he burned and blazed as he went, and left a trail of gospel light behind him, it did not long continue to shoot forth its scintillations. He organized no societies whose influence might be felt and diffused on the surrounding population. And though he excited some individuals, called in derision by their enemies "New Lights," to follow his track, they were "few and far between;" and having no concert of action, their lights soon became absorbed in the darkness which environed them.

In Virginia, the oldest colony among the twelve original provinces, the English Church had a legal existence, and the clergy were under the jurisdiction of the bishop of London; and though other sects were tolerated, they were abridged of many of their rights, and were obliged to succumb in some respects to the privileged order. It appears, however, from the history of these days, that, at the time of which we are speaking, pure religion exerted but

little influence on the great mass of the people, though doubtless there were here and there those who sighed in secret for the liberty of God's children, and looked forward to better days. A few Presbyterians, and a more numerous company of Baptists, were scattered among the people of Virginia, among whom we may presume that experimental and practical godliness was more generally exemplified than among the members of the established order; for, as to the clergy of the latter, it is acknowledged on all hands, that, with a very few exceptions, they were far gone from the spirit and practice of their original righteousness, as taught in the formularies of their church.

In the middle provinces, comprehending New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, there was a mixture of Churchmen, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and some minor sects, exercising their peculiarities, and exerting various degrees of influence in favor of the general principles of Christianity. Among these, particularly the Presbyterians and Dutch Reformed, were to be found men of profound learning and fervent piety; but their influence was chiefly limited to the bounds of their respective congregations, and could not, therefore, extend to the great mass of the population. We may hope, however, that among the followers of Penn, the descendants of the Huguenots, the insulated societies of the Baptists, as well as the others we have enumerated, there were found those "who worshipped God in the Spirit, and had no confidence in the flesh." Still it must be said, in truth, that experimental and practical piety was confined to comparatively few, and that the great mass of the people were given up to their sports and plays, living without God in the world.

In respect to the more southern colonies of the Carolinas and Georgia, though all sects were tolerated in the free exercise of their religious rites and ceremonies, the first settlers being chiefly of the established Church of England, their descendants generally cleaved to this form of Christianity, and were, like those in Virginia, generally immersed in the pleasures of the world. The persecutions endured by Messrs. John and Charles Wesley in Georgia, in 1736, are no slight proofs of the low state of religion in the colony of Georgia at that time. Nor have we any reason to believe that it was in higher repute in the Carolinas. And though the subsequent visits of Whitefield had awakened a spirit of religious inquiry in many minds in those, as well as in other parts of the country, as before stated, it had but an isolated influence; and for the want of coadjutors and successors to carry forward the work he was instrumental in beginning, by a regular organization and concentrated action, its effects had gradually disappeared, except in a few individual cases. His name, however, will ever be revered by the pious, as the founder of the Orphan House of Savannah, the Academy in Philadelphia, and as the instrument of the conversion of thousands of souls on this western continent. Had he followed in the track of Wesley, and adopted his enlarged views of the Divine goodness in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, instead of the narrow views of Calvin respecting unconditional election and reprobation — a doctrine which distinguished

the Congregational, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and most of the Baptist churches in this country — he had achieved a victory in the name of his divine Master much more enduring and beneficial in its effects upon the interests of true religion. Let the history of the two men, and the results of their labors, decide the truth of this remark. Whitefield was “a burning and shining light,” but “the people rejoiced in his light” for a short season only; while Wesley blazed in the symbolical heavens as a star of the first magnitude, collecting around him a cluster of inferior luminaries, forming a nebulae around which others have gathered, and still continue to gather, emitting various degrees of light and heat in the world around them. Whitefield followed Wesley to Savannah; and though neither of them continued his labors so as to produce much permanent effect, yet while the Orphan House has crumbled to ruins, and its decaying vestiges remain as a sorrowful memento of the benevolence of its founder, Methodism, as it was framed and fashioned by Wesley, has taken deep root in Savannah, and is thriving, under the nursing care of his sons in the gospel, throughout the surrounding country.

These remarks, I trust, will be duly appreciated by the reader, while he reflects that at the time of which we are now speaking, notwithstanding those pious efforts, pure religion, holiness of heart and life, exerted but a feeble and limited influence upon those colonies; and that therefore a reformation was loudly called for to bring the people under the hallowing influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It will be seen by the foregoing sketch that the general state of things in this country about the middle of the eighteenth century, the time when the Wesleyan missionaries commenced their evangelical labors, was highly favorable to Christian effort. In some of the provinces the institutions of religion were established by law; and in all, Christianity was received as a revelation from God, and its ministers and ordinances were protected by the governments, and many a free toleration was allowed to all sects and denominations. And though infidelity in various shapes secretly pervaded the minds of many, insensibly shaking their faith in the authority of the sacred Scriptures, and thereby corrupted their minds and morals; yet Christianity, in some form, was the religion of the country — the sacred Scriptures were circulated in the vernacular language of the people — the Sabbath was considered as a holy day, consecrated to sacred purposes — churches had been erected — schools and colleges established — the ministers of the gospel were settled in most of the parishes in the eastern and northern provinces, and in many of the middle and southern — and the great mass of the people, though speaking divers languages, professed religion under some of its external forms and usages. Under these circumstances, it may be truly said, that this was a favorable soil for evangelical missionaries to enter upon the culture of, in the hope of returning with “joy, bringing their sheaves with them.” The general bias was in favor of Christianity, so far at least as its external form was concerned; its doctrines were generally believed, its ministers honored, and in many places its ordinances respected.

Those missionaries, therefore, who came here, were not in like circumstances with those who visit pagan nations. These have to begin every thing anew; they must fell the trees of pagan superstition, and break up the fallow ground of infidelity, and sow the seeds of Christianity often “in stony ground;” and if they are so favored as to deposit them “in good ground,” it is after a long and laborious preparation. But here were a “people prepared for the Lord.” “They were ripe for the harvest.” The missionaries addressed themselves to a people generally who already believed their message, or at least believed in the authority of the Holy Scriptures, to which they appealed for the truth of what they delivered. If they demurred at all, it was at those peculiarities by which their conduct, their mode of life, their manner of preaching, and some of their doctrines were distinguished. What these were, we shall see hereafter. All these things were favorable, and promised the happiest results as the fruit of their toil.

Another favorable state of things was, that the colonies were no longer, as they had been at some preceding times, subject to different European governments, though existing and acting under their separate colonial legislatures and local governors; they were all under the supreme jurisdiction of Great Britain, and its legislature possessed the ultimate control of their affairs, limited only by their respective charters. And, in this state of things, as the Wesleyan missionaries came from England, they came to their own brethren, preaching “Jesus and the resurrection” to their fellow subjects. And, moreover, as the principles of liberty had been diffused through these several communities, and were guaranteed to them in their chartered rights, the gospel might “have free course run and be glorified.” The missionaries, therefore had not to contend either with foreigners, “a people of a strange language,” who might look upon them as intruders upon their soil, or with legal restraints imposed upon the rights of conscience; though in some of the provinces they were not allowed, in consequence of legal enactments, the full exercise of all their functions as ministers of the gospel, yet in others they were, and they could not be legally prevented in any from proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ. This was a state of things hardly to be found at that time in any other part of the globe. Thus had God prepared the way for the spread of his gospel on this newly discovered continent.

It must not be supposed, however, that all the people in the country were professedly religious. Though the above is an accurate account of the state of things in general, yet, as before remarked, infidelity had insinuated itself into the minds of some, while many others, perhaps the great majority, had their religion yet to choose. As experimental and practical godliness was not generally enforced upon the congregations where the ministry and ordinances of Christianity were established, a dry morality, and a lifeless attention to external rites and ceremonies among professors of religion, were substituted for that fervor of piety and joy in the Holy Ghost by which holy Christians are distinguished. This state of things accounts for the general opposition which was manifested to the pure doctrines of Christ, particularly

to justification by faith in Christ, and the witness and fruits of the Spirit, when they were proclaimed by the first Methodist preachers.

But in giving a true and full state of the country, there is another thing which must not be forgotten — I allude to slavery. It is well known to all, that, at an early period of our colonial history, the slave trade made its way, in all its detestable character, to our shores; and at the time of which we are now speaking, notwithstanding the resistance made to it, in its first appearance by the colonial legislatures, it had become interwoven in nearly every civil compact in the country. This had introduced an exotic, uncongenial population into our country, not only differing in color from the mass of the people, but bowing in servitude to the masters of the soil. It will be found in the sequel that the Wesleyan missionaries were among the first, if indeed not the very first, who turned their attention especially and directly to the spiritual and moral improvement of these people; and it is on this account chiefly that this subject is introduced in this place. And that it may be clearly understood, it is necessary that we should glance at the manner in which slavery was introduced, and entailed as a fatal legacy upon many of the inhabitants of these United States.

That slavery existed among all ancient nations, the Jews, the Grecians, the Romans, the Africans, and all the barbarous tribes of men, is a fact too well known to need proof. Indeed, it is said by one of our late historians, that "slavery and the slave trade are older than the records of human society." "They are," says he, "found to have existed wherever the savage hunter began to assume the habits of pastoral and agricultural life; and, with the exception of Australasia, they have extended to every portion of the globe."³

The same historian remarks, and quotes Herodotus as authority, — "Negro slavery is not an invention of the white man. As Greeks enslaved Greeks, as the Hebrew often consented to make the Hebrew his absolute lord, as Anglo-Saxons trafficked in Anglo-Saxons, so the Negro race enslaved its own brethren. The oldest accounts of the land of the Negroes, like the glimmering traditions of Egypt and Phoenicia, of Greece and of Rome, bear witness to the existence of domestic slavery, and the caravans of dealers in Negro slaves. The oldest Greek historian commemorates the traffic. Negro slaves were seen in classic Greece, and were known at Rome and in the Roman empire."

Is it strange, then, that it should find its way to America? But how came it here? In modern times the Portuguese, about the year 1441, having visited the western coast of Africa, commenced the nefarious practice of decoying away the inhabitants for slaves. The practice once begun, the cupidity of avarice found means to continue and increase it. To make the trade as lucrative as possible, the slavers visited every port to which they could have access to make merchandise of the souls and bodies of men. This brought them to America. And though at first strongly resisted by the colonists, it was sanctioned by the supreme authority;

3 Bancroft

and even Elizabeth descended from her royalty to become a partner in the traffic, for the sake of sharing the profits. It was in 1645 that the first cargo of Negro slaves was brought into Boston; and though the voice of the Puritans was loudly raised against it as an evil to be dreaded and denounced, and ordered them to be “restored at the public charge,” yet it was afterward permitted, and gradually assumed the shape of a regular traffic. It finally spread through all the colonies, more particularly the southern, though in Virginia it was strenuously resisted, and at first only admitted conditionally, the servant standing to his master in the relation of debtor, bound to work until he had discharged the obligation he was under to him for the price at which he had been purchased. But Negro slavery was ultimately riveted on the colonies with all the rigor the laws could enforce. Thus did the profits arising from the traffic and the labors of the slave combine with the policy of the royal government at home, to sanction a practice which has entailed upon our country an evil of such tremendous magnitude, as perhaps centuries of the most wise and cautious measures may not wholly remove.

These remarks have been made for the purpose of showing,

- 1 That slavery was not at first the fault of the colonists, but of the governments of the old world, though it is manifest that having been once introduced, its familiarity and its gains at last rendered it desirable, and, as they finally came to believe, necessary, its necessity being inferred from its utility in a pecuniary point of view.
- 2 That considering the circumstances under which it originated, it was at first more the misfortune than the fault of the American people that slavery became interwoven into their civil institutions.
- 3 For the purpose of showing the actual state of things at the time when Methodism set up its banners on these western shores, that the evils with which it had to contend, as well as its advantages, may be fully known and properly considered.

Having given this introductory sketch of the first settlements of the provinces, and their subsequent progress in civil and religious matters, together with a short view of the general state of things until about the middle of the 18th century, we will now proceed to the main object of this history, which is, to trace the rise and progress of Methodism in this country. In doing this, we shall divide the subject into the following periods:

- i. From its introduction into the city of New York, in 1766, to the first conference in 1773.
- ii. From this period to the organization of the societies into a Church in 1784.
- iii. From this time to the first regular general conference in 1792.
- iv. From this to the first delegated general conference in 1812.
- v. From that period until the present time. [1838]

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END OF VOLUME ONE

BOOK I

FROM THE YEAR 1766 TO THE YEAR 1792

CHAPTER 1

A a short account of the origin of Methodism in England — Of the Rev. John Wesley — His parentage, and first labor in the ministry.

Twenty-seven years had elapsed from the time Mr. Wesley formed the first Methodist society in London, when a few Methodist emigrants from Ireland formed themselves into a society in the city of New York. But before we proceed to detail the circumstances under which this society was formed, and the subsequent events in the history of Methodism in this country, it seems proper that we should trace its origin in England, and more especially notice some particulars in the life and labors of that great man of God, the Rev. John Wesley, who was the chief instrument in beginning and carrying forward this extensive revival of true religion. Without this, any history of Methodism would be incomplete.

The Rev. John Wesley was the second son of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, and was born at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, June 17th, 1703, O. S. He received his first lessons of instruction from his mother, a woman admirably qualified for the right education and training of her children. His father was a learned and pious minister of the establishment, and his mother was not less strenuously attached than he to the doctrines, usages, and formularies of that church. In these principles the son was educated, and the impressions made upon his mind under the management of the skillful teachings of such a mother, and the guidance and example of such a father, were never wholly erased, but became the guiding principles, with some few deviations from strict conformity to the establishment, of his subsequent life.

At the age of eleven, in the year 1714, he was dismissed from the immediate care of his mother, and placed at the Charter House, under the able tuition of Dr. Walker, with whom, on account of his sobriety and diligence in his studies, he became a great favorite.

At the age of sixteen he entered college at Oxford, and soon gave evidence, by his progress in his studies, of that acuteness of intellect, and sternness of virtue, by which he was afterward so eminently distinguished. When about twenty years of age he began to think seriously of entering into holy orders; and accordingly, after consulting his father and mother, turned his attention to those books and studies which were best adapted to give him the needful information.

In September, 1725, he was ordained a deacon, and the following year elected fellow of Lincoln College. He took his degree in February, 1727, and in 1728 was ordained a priest or presbyter in the Church of England. In 1729 he attended the meetings of a small society which had been formed at Oxford, in which were included his brother Charles and Mr. Morgan, for the purpose of assisting each other in their studies, and of consulting how they might employ their time to the best advantage. The same year he became a tutor in the college, received pupils, and presided as moderator in the disputations six times a week.

It was about this time, the society above named having attracted some attention from the regularity of their lives, and their efforts to do good to others, that some of the wits at Oxford applied to the members the name of Methodists, a name by which John Wesley and his followers have ever since been distinguished. Whatever might have suggested this name to those who first used it in this application, whether in reference to an ancient sect of physicians, or to some Christians so called in the early days of the Reformation, it is no small recommendation of those who were thus designated at this time, that it was applied to them as descriptive of the rigidity with which they adhered to method in their studies, the regularity of their deportment, and their diligence in visiting the sick and the poor, with a view to relieve their wants, and impart to them religious instruction. Happy will it be for those who are still designated by the same descriptive appellation, if they shall continue to exemplify the same virtues, and the same pursuit after intellectual and spiritual improvement. It was not long after that the holiness of their lives gained for them a still more worthy epithet, namely, The Holy Club, and finally, on account of the frequency with which they commemorated the sufferings of their divine Master, that of Sacramentarians. These things, however, were so far from damping the ardor of their zeal, that they served only to reanimate them, with renewed courage, and stimulate them to perseverance in the discharge of their duties. In all these works John Wesley was the distinguished leader.

Passing over the events of his life which occurred during the remainder of the days he spent at Oxford, in which he continued to be characterized by his wisdom in counsel, his attachment to the Church, and his charity to the poor and the ignorant, I come to notice his missionary voyage to America. In the latter part of the year 1735; through the solicitation of General Oglethorpe, and the trustees for the new colony of Georgia, he consented to deny himself of the many advantages he enjoyed in the seclusion of Oxford, and to embark, in company with his brother Charles, on a missionary enterprise for that colony. Here they landed on the 6th of February, 1736. Of his fidelity in the cause of his Master here, the privations he suffered, and the good he was instrumental in doing, I need not speak in this sketch, as a full detail of them may be seen in his biography, by Mr. Moore and others. After remaining about one year and a half, baffled in his pious design of preaching the gospel to the heathen, misrepresented and persecuted by those who ought to have been his friends and defenders, and seeing no prospect of succeeding in his main design, which was to convert the Indians, he took leave of the Georgians, and arrived in London February 3, 1738.

This voyage had its benefits. On his passage over to America, there being several Moravians on board, he had frequent opportunities of conversing with them, by which he learned "the way of God," particularly the way of justification through faith in Jesus Christ, and the necessity and privilege of the witness and fruits of the Holy Spirit "more perfectly." On his return to England he renewed his acquaintance with some of the Moravian ministers; and after much conversation, in which his objections to the above doctrines were fully obviated

by appeals to Scripture and the experience of God's children, he says, "About a quarter before nine," (in the evening,) "while one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, where he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." About the same time his brother Charles was made a partaker of the like blessing.

Mr. Wesley had, from the time he had been convinced of the necessity of justification by faith in Christ, preached the doctrine to the people; but now since he was made a partaker of this great blessing, he began more earnestly and understandingly to proclaim aloud to sinners the "things he had seen and felt." As he had been much edified by the conversation of the Moravians, with a view to strengthen himself in the faith, he made a journey to Germany, visited Hernhuth, their principle settlement, attended their meetings, and had free and full conversations with their most eminent men on the subject of experimental and practical godliness, by which his mind was much enlightened, and his heart established in the doctrine of justification by faith, and in the enjoyment of the witness and fruit of the Holy Spirit. After thus holding communion with these saints for some time, he returned to London in September, 1738.

Having no other plan of operations than simply to get and communicate all the good in his power, after his return from Germany, he began preaching more powerfully than ever the grand doctrines of Jesus Christ; and so pointed were his appeals to the consciences of the unregenerate, and earnest his exhortations to repentance, that the "offence of the cross" soon began to manifest itself, and he was given to understand that he could no longer preach in this, and then in another church. He then, in imitation of his brother Whitefield, went into the open fields, and Kensington Commons, and other places, were made to echo with the joyful sound of salvation by faith in the name of Jesus. Success crowned his efforts. Those who were awakened under his searching appeals to a sense of their danger came to him for advice; and as their number continually increased, he found it expedient to form them into a society; and in 1743 he drew up those rules which have continued to be the general rules¹ of the societies, both in Europe and America, to this day, with one small exception.

This was the first regular organization of societies by Mr. Wesley, and the formation of classes soon followed. Among those who were converted under his ministry, and joined his societies, were some young men "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," to whom it became manifest a "dispensation of the gospel was committed;" and though in consequence of his strong attachment to the established order of things in his church, he submitted with great reluctance to employ them, yet being convinced they were called of God to this work, he

1 These rules will be inserted in their proper place.

dare not refuse the help thus afforded him by the Head of the church. Hence originated the employment of lay-preachers, an irregularity for which Mr. Wesley suffered much persecution. As the work increased under his, his brother's, and the labors of those preachers, to avoid confusion it became necessary to have a more digested plan of proceeding: this gave rise to calling the preachers together for conference, the first of which was held in London in June, 1744. From this time the work went on more rapidly than ever, and it soon spread throughout different parts of England and Wales.

It is by no means necessary, in this sketch of the rise and progress of Methodism in Great Britain, to enter into farther details; and even thus much has been given that the reader might see the root of that tree, the branches of which have since extended over this western hemisphere, and become a shelter for so many of the weary sons of apostate Adam, "who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." Suffice it therefore to say, that Mr. Wesley continued his evangelical labors, assisted occasionally by a few pious clergymen of the establishment, among whom the most efficient was his brother Charles, and afterward Mr. Fletcher, and those whom God raised up from among his sons in the gospel, extending their labors to Ireland and Scotland, until, in 1766, a way opened for the introduction of this same gospel into America. At this time Methodism, under the skilful hand of the Wesleys, had received a regular shape, was known as a distinct denomination, though still adhering to the Church of England, and had adopted such a method of carrying forward its operations as to become a compact system, every part of which moved in obedience to him who, under God, had brought it into existence. I shall conclude this chapter with a few reflections.

- 1 It appears that the founder of Methodism was fully qualified for, and regularly called to his work.
- 2 That the work was eminently the work of God.
- 3 That Mr. Wesley was led into it without any previously digested plan of his own, but was conducted forward by the indications of divine Providence and grace, in the adoption of those measures, and the selection of those means, which arose out of the circumstances in which he was placed, and, which were evidently sanctioned of God for the spiritual good of mankind.
- 4 That he was so far from setting out in his career with a view of putting himself at the head of a sect, that his only object was to do good, to revive primitive Christianity in the church of which he was a minister, in conformity to the letter and spirit of its own articles of faith and formuleries of devotion. But that being opposed and persecuted by the carnal clergy of the establishment, as well as by Catholics and dissenters, he was forced either to disobey God by relinquishing his work, or to become the leader of a distinct sect. He wisely chose the latter, for which thousands will bless God in time and eternity.

CHAPTER 2

From the introduction of Methodism into the city of New York, in 1766, to the landing of the first missionaries in 1769.

The introduction of Methodism into these United States was attended with those circumstances which show how great events often result from comparatively insignificant causes. Like the entire structure of Methodism, it originated without any foresight of man, without any previous design in the instruments to bring about such an event, and without any of those previously devised plans which generally mark all human enterprises. And yet it will doubtlessly mark an era in the history of our country, on which its future historians will stop and pause, as having a bearing, it is hoped for good, on its destinies. The spirit of discontent had already begun to vent itself in low murmurings and secret whispers against the supposed wrongs and oppressions of the mother country, when Methodism commenced its leavening influence on the minds of a few obscure persons in the city of New York. And although it formed no part of the design of its disciples to enter into the political speculations of the day, nor to intermeddle with the civil affairs of the country, yet it is thought that its extensive spread in this country, the hallowing influence it has exerted on society in uniting in one compact body so many members, through the medium of an itinerant ministry, interchanging from north to south, and from east to west, has contributed not a little to the union and prosperity of the nation.

Let us, however, hasten to lay before the reader the facts and circumstances indicated at the head of this chapter.

We have already stated, that the first Methodist society was established in the city of New York, in the year 1766. This was done by a small number of pious emigrants from Ireland, who, previously to their removal to this [country], had been members of a Methodist society in their own country. Among their number was Mr. Philip Embury, a local preacher. Though they had been attached to Wesleyan Methodism at home, it appears that, on their arrival here, they came very near making “shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.” They were strangers in a strange land; and not finding any pious acquaintances with whom they could associate, they gradually lost their relish for divine things, and sunk away into the spirit of the world. In this state of lukewarmness and worldly mindedness they were found the next year on the arrival of another family from Ireland, among whom was a pious “mother in Israel,” to whose zeal in the cause of God they were all indebted for the revival of the spirit of piety among them. Soon after her arrival, she ascertained that those who had preceded her had so far departed from their “first love” as to be mingling in the frivolities and sinful amusements of life. The knowledge of this painful fact aroused her indignation, and with a zeal which deserves commemoration, she suddenly entered, the room where they were assembled, seized the pack of cards with which they were playing, and threw them into the

fire. Having thus unceremoniously destroyed their “playthings,” she addressed herself to them in language of expostulation; and turning to Mr. Embury, she said, “You must preach to us, or we shall all go to hell together, and God will require our blood at your hands!” This pointed appeal had its intended effect, in awaking his attention to the perilousness of their condition. Yet, as if to excuse himself from the performance of an obvious duty, he tremblingly replied, “I cannot preach, for I have neither a house nor congregation.” “Preach in your own house first, and to our own company,” was the reply. Feeling the responsibility of his situation, and not being able any longer to resist the importunities of his reprover, he consented to comply with her request; and accordingly preached his first sermon, “in his own hired house,” to five persons only. This, it is believed, was the first Methodist sermon ever preached in America.

As they continued to assemble together for mutual edification, so their numbers were gradually increased, and they were much comforted and strengthened by “exhorting one another daily.” They were too few in number, however, to attract much public attention, and for some time they remained in apparent obscurity. As might be expected, they gradually gained more and more notoriety; for the name of WESLEY, as well as of METHODIST, was not unknown in this country; and the very reproach which was heaped upon him and his followers gave him and them a notoriety which otherwise they might never have gained. Notwithstanding, therefore, the fewness of their number, and the secluded manner in which they held their meetings, they soon found that they must either procure a larger place, or preclude many from their meetings who were desirous to attend. They accordingly rented a room in the neighborhood of larger dimensions, the expense of which was defrayed by voluntary contributions. Here they assembled for mutual edification, Mr. Embury continuing to lead their devotions, and to expound to them the word of God. An event happened about this time which tended to bring them more into notice, and to attract a greater number of hearers. This was the arrival of Captain Webb, an officer in the British army, at that time stationed in Albany, in the state of New York. He had been brought to the “knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins,” under the ministry of Mr. Wesley, in Bristol, England, about the year 1765; and though a military character, such was his love for immortal souls, that he was constrained to declare unto them the loving-kindness of God. This he did, first to his fellow-soldiers, and afterward to all who were willing to hear him. His first appearance as a stranger among the “little flock” in New York, in his military costume, gave them no little uneasiness, as they were fearful that he had come to “spy out their liberties,” or to interrupt them in their meetings; but when they saw him kneel in prayer, and otherwise participate with them in their worship, their fears subsided; and on forming a more intimate acquaintance, they found that Captain Webb had “partaken of like precious faith” with themselves. He was accordingly invited to preach. The novelty of his appearance in the badges of a military officer excited no little surprise. This, together with the energy with

which he spoke in the name of the Lord, drew many to the place of worship, and the room where they assembled soon became too small to accommodate all who wished to hear. But what greatly encouraged them in their “work of faith and labor of love” was, that sinners were awakened and converted to God, and added to the society. These, continuing to walk in the “fellowship of the Holy Ghost,” were much strengthened and comforted, while others who beheld their godly conversation were convinced of the power and excellence of their religion.

To accommodate all who wished to hear, they next hired a rigging loft in William Street, and fitted it up for a place of public worship. Here they assembled for a considerable time, edified in faith and holiness by the labors of Mr. Embury, who was occasionally assisted by Capt. Webb. While the society were thus going forward in their work in New York, Capt. Webb made excursions upon Long Island, and even went as far as Philadelphia, preaching, wherever he could find an opening, the gospel of the Son of God, and success attended his labors, many being awakened to a sense of their sinfulness through his pointed ministry, and brought to the knowledge of the truth. In consequence of the accession of numbers to the society, and hearers of the word, the rigging loft also became too small, and hence they began to consult together on the propriety of building a house of worship.

But, for the accomplishment of this pious undertaking, many difficulties were to be encountered. The members of the society were yet few in number and most of them of the poorer class, and of course had but a limited acquaintance and influence in the community. For some time a painful suspense kept them undetermined which way to act. But while all were deliberating on the most suitable means to be adopted to accomplish an object so desirable, and even necessary for their continued prosperity, an elderly lady,² one of the Irish emigrants before mentioned, while fervently engaged in prayer for direction in this important enterprise, received, with inexpressible sweetness and power, this answer — “I, the Lord, will do it.” At the same time a plan was presented to her mind, which, on being submitted

2 The name of this pious woman was Hick, the mother of the late Paul Hick, who became a member of the Methodist E. Church in his youth, and was subsequently a class leader and trustee, in which offices he continued until near the close of life, and finally died in the triumphs of faith in the 74th year of his age. He has children and grandchildren now members of the church in the city of New York. He has often conversed with the writer respecting the circumstances and incidents of these early days of Methodism, with much apparent delight and gratitude. When quite a lad, his mother used to lead him by the hand to the meetings; and, said he, “the first sixpence I could ever call my own, I put into the plate which was carried around to receive the contributions of the people, and I felt, in so doing, an inexpressible pleasure.” God abundantly rewarded him in after life, with both temporal and spiritual blessings, and he lived to see this “seed of the kingdom spring up and bear fruit, even a hundredfold.” Several of the facts above narrated were received by the writer from Mr. Hick and other members of the family.

to the society, was generally approved of, and finally adopted. They proceeded to issue a subscription paper, waited on the mayor of the city and other opulent citizens, to whom they explained their object, and from them received such liberal donations as greatly encouraged them to proceed in their undertaking. Thus countenanced by their fellow citizens, they succeeded in purchasing several lots in John Street, on which they erected a house of worship, 80 feet in length and 42 in breadth calling it, from respect to the venerable founder of Methodism, WESLEY CHAPEL. Such, however, were the municipal relations in the province at that time, that they were not allowed to consecrate the house exclusively for divine worship; they therefore devoted a small portion of it to domestic purposes. This was the first meeting house ever erected by a Methodist congregation in America — and this was built in the year 1768, and the first sermon was preached in it October 30, 1768, by Mr. Embury.

While this house was in progress, they felt the necessity of procuring the services of a more competent preacher. Though Mr. Embury was a zealous and good man, yet he had but moderate abilities as a preacher. He was obliged, moreover, to work with his own hands to support himself and family, and therefore could not devote his labors exclusively to the work of the ministry. To supply this deficiency the society wisely determined to apply to Mr. Wesley for help; and the following letter, signed T. T., will show the general state of the society, and the earnestness with which they solicited the requisite aid.

“New York, 11 April, 1768

“Rev. and Very Dear Sir, — I intended writing to you for several weeks past; but a few of us had a very material transaction in view. I therefore postponed writing until I could give you a particular account thereof; this was the purchasing of ground for building a preaching house upon, which, by the blessing of God, we have now concluded. But before I proceed, I shall give you a short account of the state of religion in this city. By the best intelligence I can collect, there was little either of the form or power of it until Mr. Whitefield came over, thirty years ago; and even after his first and second visits, there appeared but little fruit of his labors. But during his visit fourteen or fifteen years ago, there was a considerable shaking among the dry bones. Divers were savingly converted; and this work was much increased in his last journey, about fourteen years since, when his words were really like a hammer and like a fire. Most part of the adults were stirred up: great numbers pricked to the heart, and, by a judgment of charity, several found peace and joy in believing. The consequence of this work was, churches were crowded, and subscriptions raised for building new ones. Mr. Whitefield’s example provoked most of the ministers to a much greater degree of earnestness. And by the multitudes of people, old and young, rich and poor, flocking to the churches, religion became an honorable profession. There was now no outward cross to be taken up therein. Nay, a person who could not speak about the grace of God, and the new birth, was esteemed unfit for genteel company. But in a while, instead of pressing forward, and growing in grace, (as he exhorted them,) the generality were pleading for the remains

of sin and the necessity of being in darkness. They esteemed their opinions as the very essentials of Christianity, and regarded not holiness, either of heart or life.

The above appears to me to be a genuine account of the state of religion in New York eighteen months ago, when it pleased God to rouse up Mr. Embury to employ his talent (which for several years had been hid, as it were, in a napkin) by calling sinners to repentance, and exhorting believers to let their light shine before men. He spoke at first only in his own house. A few were soon collected together and joined into a little society, chiefly his own countrymen, Irish Germans. In about three months after, brother White and brother Souse, from Dublin, joined them. They then rented an empty room in their neighborhood, which was in the most infamous street in the city, adjoining the barracks. For some time few thought it worth their while to hear: but God so ordered it by his providence, that about fourteen months ago Captain Webb, barrack-master at Albany, (who was converted three years since at Bristol,) found them out, and preached in his regimentals. The novelty of a man preaching in a scarlet coat soon brought greater numbers to hear than the room could contain. But his doctrines were quite new to the hearers; for he told them point-blank, 'that all their knowledge and religion were not worth a rush, unless their sins were forgiven, and they had "the witness of God's Spirit with theirs that they were the children of God."' 'This strange doctrine, with some peculiarities in his person, made him soon taken notice of; and obliged the little society to look out for a larger house to preach in. They soon found a place that had been built for a rigging house, sixty feet in length and eighteen in breadth.

"About this period Mr. Webb, whose wife's relations lived at Jamaica, Long Island, took a house in that neighborhood, and began to preach in his own house, and several other places on Long Island. Within six months, about twenty-four persons received justifying grace, nearly half of them whites, — the rest Negroes. While Mr. Webb was (to borrow his own phrase) 'felling trees on Long Island,' brother Embury was exhorting all who attended on Thursday evenings, and Sundays, morning and evening, at the rigging house, to flee from the wrath to come. His hearers began to increase, and some gave heed to his report, about the time the gracious providence of God brought me safe to New York, after a very favorable passage of six weeks from Plymouth. It was the 26th day of October last, when I arrived, recommended to a person for lodging; I inquired of my host (who was a very religious man) if any Methodists were in New York; he answered that there was one Captain Webb, a strange sort of man, who lived on Long Island, and who sometimes preached at one Embury's, at the rigging house. In a few days I found out Embury. I soon found of what spirit he was, and that he was personally acquainted with you and your doctrines, and that he had been a helper in Ireland. He had formed two classes, one of the men, and the other of the women, but had never met the society apart from the congregation, although there were six or seven men, and as many women, who had a clear sense of their acceptance in the Beloved.

You will not wonder at my being agreeably surprised in meeting with a few here who have been and desire again to be in connection with you. God only knows the weight of affliction I felt on leaving my native country. But I have reason now to conclude God intended all for my good. Ever since I left London, my load has been removed, and I have found a cheerfulness in being banished from all near and dear to me, and I made a new covenant with my God, that I would go to the utmost parts of the earth, provided he would raise up a people with whom I might join in his praise. On the great deep I found a more earnest desire to be united with the people of God than ever before. I made a resolution that God's people should be my people, and their God my God: and, bless his holy name, I have since experienced more heartfelt happiness than ever thought it possible to have on this side eternity. All anxious care about my dear wife and children is taken away. I cannot assist them, but I daily and hourly commend them to God in prayer, and I know he hears my prayers, by an answer of love in my heart. I find power daily to devote myself unto him; and I find power also to overcome sin. If any uneasiness at all affects me, it is because I can speak so little of so good a God.

“Mr. Embury lately has been more zealous than formerly; the consequence of which is, that he is more lively in preaching; and his gifts as well as graces are much increased. Great numbers of serious persons came to hear God's word as for their lives; and their numbers increased so fast that our house for six weeks past would not contain half the people.

“We had some consultations how to remedy this inconvenience, and Mr. Embury proposed renting a small lot of ground for twenty-one years, and to exert our utmost endeavors to build a wooden tabernacle; a piece of ground was proposed; the ground rent was agreed for, and the lease was to be executed in a few days. We, however, in the meantime, had several days for fasting and prayer, for the direction of God and his blessing on our proceedings; and Providence opened such a door as we had no expectation of. A young man, a sincere Christian and constant hearer, though not joined in society, not giving any thing toward this house, offered ten pounds to buy a lot of ground, went of his own accord to a lady who had two lots to sell, on one of which there is a house that rents for eighteen pounds per annum. He found the purchase money of the two lots was six hundred pounds, which she was willing should remain in the purchasers' possession, on good security. We called once more on God for his direction, and resolved to purchase the whole. There are eight of us who are joint purchasers: among whom Mr. Webb and Mr. Lupton are men of property. I was determined the house should be on the same footing as the orphan house at Newcastle, and others in England; but as we were ignorant how to draw the deeds, we purchased for us and our heirs, until a copy of the writing is sent us from England, which we desire may be sent by the first opportunity.

“Before we began to talk of building, the devil and his children were very peaceable: but since this affair took place many ministers have cursed us in the name of the Lord, and

labored with all their might to stop their congregations from assisting us. But He that sitteth in the highest laughed them to scorn! Many have broken through, and given their friendly assistance. We have collected above one hundred pounds more than our own contributions; and have reason to hope in the whole we shall have two hundred pounds: but the house will cost four hundred pounds more, so that unless God is pleased to raise up friends we shall yet be at a loss. I believe Mr. Webb and Mr. Lupton will borrow or advance two hundred pounds, rather than the building should not go forward; but the interest of money here is a great burden — being seven per cent Some of our brethren proposed writing to you for a collection in England: but I was averse to this, as I well know our friends there are overburdened already. Yet so far I would earnestly beg: if you would intimate our circumstances to particular persons of ability, perhaps God would open their hearts to assist this infant society, and contribute to the first preaching house on the original Methodist plan in all America, (excepting Mr. Whitefield's orphan house in Georgia:) but I shall write no more on this subject.

“There is another point far more material, and in which I must importune your assistance, not only in my own name, but also in the name of the whole society. We want an able and experienced preacher; one who has both gifts and grace necessary for the work. God has not, indeed, despised the day of small things. There is a real work of grace 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 for such an undertaking; and the progress of the gospel here depends much upon the qualifications of preachers.

In regard to a preacher, if possible we must have a man of wisdom, of sound faith, and a good disciplinarian: one whose heart and soul are in the work; and I doubt not but by the goodness of God such a flame will be soon kindled as would never stop until it reached the great South Sea. We may make many shifts to evade temporal inconveniences; but, cannot purchase such a preacher as I have described. Dear sir, I entreat you, for the good of thousands, to use your utmost endeavors to send one over. I would advise him to take shipping at Bristol, Liverpool, or Dublin, in the month of July, or early in August: by embarking at this season he will have fine weather in his passage, and probably arrive here in the month of September. He will see before winter what progress the gospel has made.

“With respect to money for the payment of the preachers' passage over, if they could not procure it, we would sell our coats and shirts to procure it for them.

“I most earnestly beg an interest in your prayers, and trust you, and many of our brethren, will not forget the church in this wilderness.

“I remain with sincere esteem, Rev. and dear sir,

“Your very affectionate brother and servant,

“T. T.”

Mr. Wesley refers to these circumstances in his Works, and says, "Tuesday, August 1, our conference began at Leeds. On Thursday, I mentioned the case of our brethren in New York. For some years past, several of our brethren from England and Ireland, (and some of them preachers,) had settled in North America, and had in various places formed societies, particularly in Philadelphia and New York. The society at New York had lately built a commodious preaching house, and now desired our help, being in great want of money, but much more of preachers. Two of our preachers, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pillmore, willingly offered themselves for the service; by whom we determined to send over fifty pounds as a token of our brotherly love." These brethren, who were the first regular itinerant Methodist preachers who visited this country, landed at Gloucester Point, six miles below Philadelphia, October 24, 1769. They immediately entered upon their Master's work, Mr. Boardman taking his station in New York, and Mr. Pillmore in Philadelphia, occasionally changing with each other, and sometimes making short excursions into the country. They found a people ripe for the gospel; for in all places whither they went, multitudes flocked to hear the word, and many were induced to seek an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having thus traced the commencement of this work of God in the city of New York, where the seeds of Methodism were first planted in American soil, we will turn our attention to another part of the Lord's vineyard, where similar efforts were made with the like success. About the same time that Mr. Embury was laying the foundation for this spiritual edifice in New York, and Captain Webb was, to use his own language, "felling the trees on Long Island," and some other places, Mr. Robert Strawbridge, another local preacher from Ireland, came over and settled in Frederick county, in Maryland; and being a pious and zealous man, he commenced preaching in his own house, and other private houses, the doctrines of Jesus Christ as held and taught by Mr. Wesley. His word was attended "with the power and demonstration of the Spirit," and very soon a society was collected of such as "desired to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." Mr. Strawbridge succeeded in building a house of worship, near Pipe Greek, in Maryland, called the Log Meeting House, in which he continued for some time to preach to the people, and to watch over the society he had formed. The following anecdote is related of this good man by Mr. Garretson: — "He came to the house of a gentleman near where I lived to stay all night. I had never heard him preach; but as I had a great desire to be in company with a person who had caused so much talk in the country, I went over and sat and heard him converse until nearly midnight; and when I retired it was with these thoughts — I have never spent a few hours so agreeably in my life. He spent most of the time in explaining Scripture, and in giving interesting anecdotes; and perhaps one of them will do to relate here A congregation came together in a certain place, and a gentleman who was hearing thought that the preacher had directed his whole sermon to him, and he retired home after the sermon in disgust. However, he concluded to hear him once more, and hide himself behind the people, so that the preacher

should not see him; it was the old story — his character was delineated. He retired dejected; but concluded that possibly the preacher saw him, and said, ‘I will try him once more;’ he did so, and hid himself behind the door. The preacher took for his text, ‘And a man shall be as a hiding place, &c.’ In the midst of the sermon, the preacher cried out, ‘Sinner, come from your scouting hole!’ The poor fellow came forward, looked the preacher in the face, and said, ‘You are a wizard, and the devil is in you; I will hear you no more.’”

Thus was at foundation laid by these two men of God, [Philip Embury and Robert Strawbridge] who probably came to America for other purposes than that of preaching the gospel, for a permanent work of God in this country; and it was the Macedonian cry which was sent to England by these people, and more especially those in New York, which moved Mr. Wesley to send them, in answer to their petition, the help they so much needed.

CHAPTER 3

From the arrival of the first missionaries in 1769 to the first conference in 1773.

We have already seen that Messrs. Boardman and Pillmore, after their arrival, entered upon their respective fields of labor with ardor and success. After spending some time in Philadelphia, hearing of the labors of Mr. Strawbridge in Maryland, Mr. Pillmore paid him a visit, and endeavored to strengthen his hands in the Lord. After preaching to the people in that part of Maryland, and rejoicing in the good which had been effected by the labors of Mr. Strawbridge, he visited some parts of Virginia and North Carolina, where he preached with success, and formed some societies. Here he also found the people exceedingly attentive to the word of God, and manifesting a cordial feeling for those who preached it. After laboring a short time in those parts of the country, where he was much encouraged at the appearance of things, he returned to Philadelphia. The following letter, which he addressed to Mr. Wesley, will show the state of things here. The letter is dated,

“Philadelphia, Oct. 31, 1769.

“Rev. Sir, — By the blessing of God we are safely arrived here, after a tedious passage of nine weeks. We were not a little surprised to find Captain Webb in town, a society of about one hundred members, who desire to be in close connection with you. ‘This is the Lord’s doings, and it is marvellous in our eyes.’

I have preached several times, and the people flock to hear in multitudes. Sunday evening I went out upon the common. I had the stage appointed for the horse race for my pulpit, and I think between four and five thousand hearers, who heard with attention still as night. Blessed be God for field preaching. When I began to talk of preaching at 5 o’clock in the morning, the people thought it would not answer in America however, I resolved to try, and I had a very good congregation.

“There seems to be a great and effectual door opening in this country, and I hope many souls will be gathered in. The people in general like to hear the word, and seem to have ideas of salvation by grace.”

The above letter shows the good effects of Captain Webb’s labor’s in Philadelphia, for it seems he had been instrumental in collecting not less than one hundred souls into the society previously to the arrival of Mr. Pillmore.

On coming to New York, Mr. Boardman found the society in a flourishing state under the labors of Mr. Embury. Mr. Boardman was a man of respectable talents as a preacher, of great simplicity and godly sincerity, and he entered upon his evangelical labors with a fair prospect of success, the people flocking to hear him with the utmost eagerness and attention. At this early stage of their labors in the ministry they commenced an interchange with each other, Mr. Pillmore coming to New York and Mr. Boardman going to Philadelphia. Having entered upon the charge of the society in New York, and making a fair trial among the

people, on the 24th of April, 1770, he transmitted to Mr. Wesley the following account of the state of things in this city:

“Our house contains about seventeen hundred people. About a third part of those who attend get in; the rest are glad to hear without. 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. O! may the Most High now give his Son the heathen for his inheritance. The number of the blacks that attend the preaching affects me much.”

In addition to these two eminent men, who were sent over to this country by Mr. Wesley, Mr. Robert Williams, who had been a local preacher in England, and Mr. John King, from London, came over, not under the direction of Mr. Wesley, but on their own account; the former, however, having a permit from him to preach under the direction of the missionaries. Mr. Williams labored as a local preacher with acceptance among the people; and with considerable success, and so also did Mr. King, after being duly examined and licensed by Mr. Pillmore. Both of these brethren so demeaned themselves as ministers of the gospel, that they were afterward received into the traveling ministry, as may be seen by reference to the minutes of conference for the year 1773.

From the encouraging representations of the condition and disposition of the people in America, which were transmitted to Mr. Wesley, he was induced to adopt measures to furnish them with additional help in their important work. Accordingly, the next year, 1771, Mr. Francis Asbury and Mr. Richard Wright, having volunteered their services, were dismissed under the blessing of God for the help of their brethren in America. As Mr. Asbury bore such a conspicuous part in the extensive revival of pure religion, it seems proper that we should give some account of his birth and education, his call to the ministry, and the motives which led him to embark in this holy enterprise.

According to a notice in his journal, vol. ii, p.133, it appears that he was born in England, in the parish of Harrodsworth, near the foot of Hampstead Bridge, about four miles from Birmingham, in Staffordshire, on the 20th or 21st of August, 1745. His parents were people in common life, but were remarkable for honesty and industry, so that they procured a competency for themselves and family. They had but two children; a son and daughter, and the latter dying in infancy, left Francis the only son of his mother, and the only child of his parents. It seems that they lived in a very dark time and place as respects spiritual and divine things.

He was early sent to school, and though he took delight in learning to read, particularly his Bible, yet he met with such cruel treatment from his master as to contract such a dread of him, that he preferred almost any thing to his school. He accordingly, when about thirteen years of age, left the school and went to a trade, in which he continued as an apprentice about six years and a half, during which time he was treated with great kindness and attention.

The following is his own account of his conversion, of his call to, and entrance upon, the Christian ministry:

“Soon after I entered on that business, God sent a pious man, not a Methodist, into our neighborhood, and my mother invited him to our house; by his conversation and prayers I was awakened before I was fourteen years of age. It was now easy and pleasing to leave my company, and I began to pray morning and evening, being drawn by the cords of love, as with the bands of a man. I soon left our blind priest, and went to West-Bromwick church: here I heard Ryland, Stillingfleet, Talbot, Bagnall, Mansfield, Hawes, and Venn, great names, and esteemed gospel ministers. I became very serious, reading a great deal — Whitefield and Cennick’s Sermons, and every good book I could meet with. It was not long before I began to inquire of my mother who, where, what were the Methodists; she gave me a favorable account, and directed me to a person that could take me to Wednesbury to hear them. I soon found this was not the church — but it was better. The people were so devout — men and women kneeling down, saying, Amen. — Now, behold! they were singing hymns — sweet sound! Why, strange to tell! the preacher had no prayer-book, and yet he prayed wonderfully! What was yet more extraordinary, the man took his text, and had no sermon-book: thought I, this is wonderful indeed! It is certainly a strange way, but the best way. He talked about confidence, assurance, &c. — of which all my flights and hopes fell short. I had no deep convictions, nor had I committed any deep known sins. At one sermon, some time after, my companion was powerfully wrought on: I was exceedingly grieved that I could not weep like him; yet I knew myself to be in a state of unbelief. On a certain time, when we were praying in my father’s barn, I believe the Lord pardoned my sins, and justified my soul; but my companions reasoned me out of this belief, saying, ‘Mr. Mather said a believer was as happy as if he was in heaven.’ I thought I was not as happy as I would be there, and gave up my confidence, and that for months; yet I was happy; free from guilt and fear, and had power over sin, and felt great inward joy. After this we met for reading and prayer, and had large and good meetings, and were much persecuted, until the persons at whose houses we held them were afraid, and they were discontinued. I then held meetings frequently at my father’s house, exhorting the people there, as also at Sutton-Cofields, and several souls professed to find peace through my labors. I met class a while at Bromwick Heath, and met in band at Wednesbury. I had preached some months before I publicly appeared in the Methodist meeting houses; when my labors became more public and extensive, some were amazed, not knowing how I had exercised elsewhere. Behold me now a local preacher; the humble and willing servant of any and of every preacher that called on me by night or by day, being ready, with hasty steps, to go far and wide to do good, visiting Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and indeed almost every place within my reach for the sake of precious souls; preaching, generally, three, four, and five times a week, and at the same time pursuing my calling. I think when I was between twenty-one and

twenty-two years of age I gave myself up to God and his work, after acting as a local preacher near the space of five years: it is now the 19th of July, 1792. I have been laboring for God and souls about thirty years, or upward.

“Some time after I had obtained a clear witness of my acceptance with God, the Lord showed me, in the heat of youth and youthful blood, the evil of my heart: for a short time I enjoyed, as I thought, the pure and perfect love of God; but this happy frame did not long continue, although at seasons I was greatly blessed. While I was a traveling preacher in England, I was much tempted, finding myself exceedingly ignorant of almost every thing a minister of the gospel ought to know. How I came to America, and the events which have happened since my Journal will show.”

In the first volume of his Journal he records the following facts the exercises of his mind, and his final determination to visit this country:

“On the 7th of August, 1771, the conference began at Bristol, in England. Before this, I had felt for half a year strong intimations in my mind that I should visit America; which I laid before the Lord, being unwilling to do my own will, or to run before I was sent. During this time my trials were very great, which the Lord, I believe, permitted to prove and try me, in order to prepare me for future usefulness. At the conference it was proposed that some preachers should go over to the American continent. I spoke my mind, and made a offer of myself. It was accepted by Mr. Wesley and others, who judged that I had a call. From Bristol I went home to acquaint my parents with my great undertaking, which I opened in as gentle a manner as possible. Though it was grievous to flesh and blood, they consented let me go. My mother is one of tenderest parents in the world: but I believe she was blessed in the present instance with divine assistance to part with me. I visited most of my friends in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Gloucestershire, and felt much life and power among them. Several of our meetings were indeed held in the Spirit and life of God. Many of my friends were struck with wonder when they heard of my going; but none opened their mouths against it, hoping it was of God. Some wished that their situation would allow them to go with me.

“I returned to Bristol in the latter end of August, where Richard Wright was waiting for me, to sail in a few days for Philadelphia. When I came to Bristol I had not one penny of money: but the Lord soon opened the hearts of friends, who supplied me with clothes and ten pounds: thus I found by experience that the Lord will provide for those who trust in him.

“On Wednesday, September 2, we set sail from a port near Bristol; and having a good wind soon passed the channel. For three days I was very ill with the sea-sickness: and no sickness I ever knew was equal to it. The captain behaved well to us. On the Lord’s day, September 8, brother W. preached a sermon on deck, and all the crew gave attention.

“Thursday 12th. I will set down a few things that lie on my mind. Whither am I going? To the new world. What to do? To gain honor? No, if I know my own heart. To get money?

No, I am going to live to God, and to bring others so to do. In America there has been a work of God: some moving first among the Friends, but in time it declined: likewise by the Presbyterians, but among them also it declined. The people God owns in England are the Methodists. The doctrines they preach, and the discipline they enforce, are, I believe, the purest of any people now in the world. The Lord has greatly blessed these doctrines and this discipline in the three kingdoms: they must therefore be pleasing to him. If God does not acknowledge me in America, I will soon, return to England. I know my views are upright now — may they never be otherwise!”

They landed in Philadelphia, October 7, 1771, and were most cordially received by the people. They immediately repaired to the church, and heard a sermon from Mr. Pillmore, whom they found at his station and in his work.

“The people,” says Mr. Asbury, “looked on us with pleasure, hardly knowing how to show their love sufficiently, bidding us welcome with fervent affection; and receiving us as angels of God. O that we may walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. When I came near the American shore my very heart melted within me: to think from whence I came, where I was going, and what I was going about. But I felt my mind open to the people, and my tongue loosed to speak. I feel that God is here, and find plenty of all I need.”

As the printed minutes extend no farther back than 1773, we have no other account of the numbers in society at this time than what is found in Mr. Asbury’s Journal, vol. iii, p. 109, where he says there were “about three hundred in New York, two hundred and fifty in Philadelphia, and a few in New Jersey;” but there must have been some also in Maryland, as the fruit of the labors of Mr. Strawbridge, probably the whole number was not less than six hundred.

After spending a few days in Philadelphia, delivering his testimony for God, Mr. Asbury left there for the city of New York, where he arrived on the 12th, of November, and on the 13th preached to the people from 1 Cor. ii, 2, “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” “I approved much,” says he, “of the spirit of the people; they were loving and serious; there appeared also in some a love of discipline. Though I was unwilling to go to York so soon, I believe it is all well; and I still hope I am in the order of God. My friend B.” (meaning doubtless Mr. Boardman, the preacher) “is a kind, loving, worthy man, truly amiable and entertaining, and of a child-like temper.” Respecting himself he says, “I purpose to be given up to God more and more, day by day.”

It seems that previously to the arrival of Mr. Asbury the preachers had confined their labors chiefly to the cities. This plan of operations did not suit the enlarged desires of Mr. Asbury. He alludes to this circumstance in the following words: “At present I am dissatisfied, and judge that 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 come over with an upright intention, and through the grace of God I will make it appear, and am determined that no man

shall bias me with soft words and fair speeches.” — “Whomsoever I please or displease, I will be faithful to God, to the people, and to my own soul.” This determination I believe he steadily and perseveringly kept to the end of his life. And in pursuance of the design he had thus formed, he made an excursion to West Farms and to Westchester, preaching with great freedom and power the “gospel of the kingdom.” He spent the winter alternately in the city and country, extending his labors to New Rochelle, to Rye, and sometimes visiting Staten Island; and he had the unspeakable pleasure of being hailed by the people in general as a messenger of God, though sometimes persecuted and opposed by the rabble.

The consequence of thus extending his labors into the country towns and villages, was the giving a new and more vigorous impulse to religious zeal, and of calling the attention of multitudes to the gospel message, who otherwise might never have heard it. This example of Mr. Asbury had its effect upon the other preachers, and in the latter part of the year some of them visited the provinces of Delaware and Maryland, and preached on the western and eastern shore of Maryland. Two private members of the society raised up by Mr. Strawbridge, were the first Methodists who visited Kent county, on the eastern shore of Maryland. They came to one John Randal’s, conversed and prayed with the family, and left behind them some salutary impressions. This created a desire for Methodist preaching; and shortly after, Mr. Strawbridge himself paid them a visit, and preached to them the gospel of Christ. He was followed by Robert Williams; and in December following, 1772, Mr. Asbury went into Kent county. “Before preaching,” he says, “one Mr. R., a Church minister, came to me and desired to know who I was, and whether I was licensed. I told him who I was. He spoke great swelling words, and said he had authority over the people, and was charged with the care of their souls. He also said that I could not, and should not preach: and if I did, he should proceed against me according to law. I let him know that I came to preach, and preach I would; and farther asked him if he had authority to bind the consciences of the people, or if he was a justice of the peace; and told him I thought he had nothing to do with me. He charged me with making a schism. I told him that I did not draw the people from the Church, and asked him if his church was then open. He then said that I hindered the people from their work. I asked him if fairs and horse races did not hinder them; and farther told him that I came to help him. He said he had not hired me for an assistant, and did not want my help. I told him if there were no swearers or other sinners, he was sufficient. But, said he, What do you come for? I replied, To turn sinners to God. He said, Cannot I do that as well as you? I told him that I had authority from God. He then laughed at me, and said, You are a fine fellow indeed! I told him I did not do this to invalidate his authority: and also gave him to understand that I did not wish to dispute with him; but he said he had business with me, and came into the house in a great rage. I began to preach, and urged the people to repent and turn from all their transgressions, so iniquity should not prove their ruin. After preaching the parson went out, and told the people they did wrong in coming to hear

me, and said I spoke against learning, whereas I only spoke to this purpose — when a man turned from all sin he would adorn every character in life, both in church and state.”

This quotation is given as a specimen of the sort of opposition the first Methodist preachers had to encounter in that part of the country. The clergy in general had but a name to live, while they were dead to spiritual and divine things, and were therefore unprepared to receive the true messengers of peace and mercy. Through the persevering labors of Mr. Asbury and others associated with him, a gracious work was commenced on this peninsula, which has terminated in great good to the souls of thousands.

In the month of April of this year Mr. Pillmore, following the example of Mr. Asbury, traveled south, through Maryland and Virginia, as far as Norfolk, preaching in all places where he could find an opening; and in the beginning of 1773 he penetrated into the lower counties of Virginia, and thence through North Carolina to Charleston, in South Carolina, nor did he stop till he reached Savannah, in Georgia, visiting the Orphan House, which had been erected by Mr. Whitefield as early as 1740. We have no particular account of these visits, but it is presumed that they were rendered a blessing to many. He returned northwardly some time the next spring. Mr. Boardman made a tour north as far as Boston, where he preached and formed a small society, and then returned to his station in New York.

In the early part of this year Mr. Robert Williams visited Norfolk, in Virginia. Without giving any public notice, he stood on the steps of the court house and began to sing, which soon collected a number of people around him, to whom he preached, not, however, without considerable interruption from some disorderly persons. They seemed to think, indeed, that the preacher was mad, for as they had not been accustomed to hear a minister pronounce the words hell and devil in his sermons, from the frequent use Mr. Williams made of these terms they concluded he was a wicked, swearing preacher, though in some parts of his discourse they thought he preached the gospel. From this first impression of the man, no one was inclined to invite him to his house. But on hearing him a second time at the same place, they so far altered their opinion respecting his sanity that he was invited to their houses; and not long after, a society was formed in Norfolk, which has continued to this day, gradually increasing in number and usefulness.

October 10, 1772, Mr. Asbury says he received a letter from Mr. Wesley, in which he required a strict attention to the general rules, and also appointing him general assistant. To understand this designation it is necessary to observe, that Mr. Wesley, being, under God, the founder of the societies, was considered the head of the whole body, both in Europe and America, and the one having charge of a circuit under him was styled his assistant, and those under this assistant were styled helpers. In appointing, therefore, Mr. Asbury as general assistant, he constituted him the head of all the preachers and societies in America, with power to station the preachers, &c., under the general direction of Mr. Wesley himself.

As yet no regular conference of preachers had been convened, but they regulated their matters at the quarterly meetings. At one of these meetings, which was held Tuesday, December 23, on the western shore of Maryland, Mr. Asbury, after preaching on the duties of the ministry, says they “proceeded to their temporal business, and considered the following propositions:

- 1 What are our collections? We found them sufficient to defray our expenses.
- 2 How are the preachers stationed? It is regretted that, in answering this question, Mr. Asbury gives the initials only of the names of the preachers who received their stations. He says, “Brother S. (by which we suppose he means, Strawbridge,) “and brother O.” (who?) “in Frederick county,” “brother K.” (King?) “brother W.” (Williams?) “and J. R” (who?) “on the other side of the Bay; and myself in Baltimore.
- 3 Shall we be strict in our society meetings, and not admit strangers? Agreed.
- 4 Shall we drop preaching in the day-time through the week? Not agreed to.
- 5 Will the people be contented without our administering the sacraments. John King was neuter; brother Strawbridge pleaded much for the ordinances, and so did the people, who seemed to be much biased by him. I told them I would not agree to it at that time, and insisted on our abiding by our rules.
- 6 Shall we make collections weekly to pay the preachers’ board and expenses? This was not agreed to. We then inquired into the moral character of the preachers and exhorters.”

Though Mr. Asbury took his station in Baltimore, where he was most cordially received by the people, he by no means confined his labors to that city, but extended them into the towns and villages in the vicinity, everywhere proclaiming in the ears of the people the joyful news of salvation by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus. In consequence of thus enlarging the boundaries of their labors — for the other preachers followed the apostolic example set them by Mr. Asbury — the work of God spread among the people, so that considerable additions were made to the societies. This, though the numbers were not yet taken, appears evident from Mr. Asbury’s Journal, where he speaks of meeting and regulating the classes in a number of places.

It was remarked above, that most of the clergy in the southern provinces were destitute of experimental godliness; and therefore, instead of helping forward the work of God as promoted by the Methodist preachers, they either manifested indifference, “caring for none of these things,” or otherwise set themselves in opposition to it. To this, however, there were some honorable exceptions. Among these was the Rev. Mr. Jarratt, of Virginia, under whose preaching there had been a considerable revival of religion, particularly at a place called

White Oak. In imitation of Mr. Wesley and his preachers, Mr. Jarratt formed those who were awakened to a sense of their danger into a society, that they might assist each other in working out their salvation. The good effects of these meetings were so apparent, in producing “the fruits of good living,” that they were encouraged, and the revival went on gradually, chiefly under the labors of Mr. Jarratt, from 1771 to 1773, spreading from fifty to sixty miles “in the region round about.”

In the beginning of the year 1773, Mr. Robert Williams visited Petersburg, in Virginia, and preached with success, first in the town, and then through various parts of the country. He was a plain, pointed preacher, indefatigable in his labors, and many were awakened and converted to God through his public and private exhortations; and it is said that the name of Robert Williams was long remembered by many who were his spiritual children in those parts. He and other Methodist preachers who visited Virginia were kindly received by Mr. Jarratt, and they greatly assisted each other in promoting the work of the Lord.

In the meantime Mr. Asbury continued his itinerating labors very extensively through the country, devoting all his time and attention to the work of the ministry. Nor did he labor in vain. Many sinners were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and new societies were established in various places.

Mr. Wesley was considered the father of the societies both in Europe and America. To him, therefore, they looked for direction in all important matters, and especially for a regular supply of preachers — for as yet none had been raised in this country who had entered the itinerant ranks. That he might understand the true state of things for himself, and thereby be competent to act with the more discretion and efficiency, it seems that he had manifested a desire to visit America; for Mr. Asbury says, under date of May 6, 1773, “This day a letter from Mr. Wesley came to hand, dated March 2, in which he informs me that the time for his visiting America is not yet, being detained by the building of a new chapel.” Soon after this, however, Mr. Asbury was cheered by the arrival of two missionaries, Messrs. Thomas Rankin and George Shadford. They landed in Philadelphia on the third day of June, 1773, and immediately entered upon their work. As Mr. Rankin had traveled several years longer than Mr. Asbury, Mr. Wesley appointed him the general assistant of the societies in America.

Book II

**FROM THE FIRST CONFERENCE IN 1773, TO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE
CHURCH IN 1784**

CHAPTER 1

From the conference of 1773 to the commencement of the war in 1776

We have seen that up to this period no regular conference had been held, but that the business had been transacted at their quarterly meetings. On the arrival of Mr. Rankin with powers to act as general assistant, a conference was convened in the city of Philadelphia, July 4, 1773. This being the first regular conference ever held in America, I think it proper to give the entire minutes as they were taken down and afterward published.

“The following queries were proposed to every preacher: —

“1. Ought not the authority of Mr. Wesley and that conference to extend to the preachers and people in America, as well as in Great Britain and Ireland?

Answer Yes.

2. Ought not the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists, as contained in the minutes, to be the sole rule of our conduct, who labor in the connection with Mr. Wesley, in America?

Answer Yes.

3. If so, does it not follow, that if any preachers deviate from the minutes, we can have no fellowship with them till they change their conduct?

Answer Yes.

The following rules were agreed to by all the preachers present: —

- 1 Every preacher who acts in connection with Mr. Wesley and the brethren who labor in America, is strictly to avoid administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper.
- 2 All the people among whom we labor to be earnestly exhorted to attend the Church, and to receive the ordinances there; but in a particular manner to press the people in Maryland and Virginia to the observance of this minute.
- 3 No person or persons to be admitted into our love-feasts oftener than twice or thrice, unless they become members; and none to be admitted to the society meetings more than thrice.
- 4 None of the preachers in America to reprint any of Mr. Wesley’s books, without his authority (when it can be gotten) and the consent of their brethren.
- 5 Robert Williams to sell the books he has already printed, but to print no more, unless under the above restrictions.
- 6 Every preacher who acts as an assistant, to send an account of the work once in six months to the general assistant.

Question 1. How are the preachers stationed?

Answer New York, Thomas Rankin, to change in four months [with Shadford]; Philadelphia, George Shadford, to change four months [with Rankin]; New Jersey, John King, William Watters; Baltimore, Francis Asbury, Robert Strawbridge, Abraham Whitworth, Joseph Yearbry; Norfolk, Richard Wright; Petersburg, Robert Williams.

Question 2. What numbers are there in the society?

Answer New York, 180; Philadelphia, 180; New Jersey, 200; Maryland, 500; Virginia, 100; [Total] 1160; (Preachers 10.)

It is highly probable that some of the preachers had manifested an unwillingness to submit entirely to the authority of Mr. Wesley in all matters, and hence the reason and seasonableness of the above minute in respect to yielding obedience to his authority. That Mr. Strawbridge and some others had evinced a disposition so far to depart from Wesleyan Methodism as to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, we know; and that it required all the authority of Mr. Asbury to restrain them from this practice heretofore, is evident from a former quotation from his Journal. To prevent a repetition of this disorderly practice, it seems the above prohibitory rule was adopted in reference to this subject.

In the above stations we find the name of William Watters, who was the first American preacher who joined the itinerancy, and he continued a laborious and successful laborer in his Master's work until the day of his death.

It seems that, notwithstanding the vigilance of Mr. Asbury in correcting those abuses which had arisen from the laxity with which discipline had been administered, many disorders still existed for which an adequate remedy had not been provided. These things had been communicated to Mr. Wesley, and he therefore clothed Mr. Rankin with powers superior to any which had been vested in his predecessors in office, in the faithful exercise of which he set himself to purifying the societies from corrupt members, and restoring things to order. It was soon found that the discharge of this duty, however painful, instead of abridging the influence of ministerial labor, greatly extended it, and exerted a most salutary effect upon the societies. Speaking of the comfort he derived from the arrival of Mr. Rankin, Mr. Asbury says, "Though he will not be admired as a preacher, yet as a disciplinarian he will fill his place."

Having thus adopted the Wesleyan plan of stationing the preachers, and each man going to his work in the name of the Lord, the cause of reformation began to spread more extensively than heretofore; new societies were formed in many places, the circuits were enlarged, and a more regular administration of discipline secured. On the eastern shore of Maryland, particularly in the county of Kent, there was a considerable revival of religion, by which many souls were brought to the "knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." A class was formed at New Rochelle, about twenty miles from the city of New York. In Baltimore also there was an enlargement of the work, more especially at Fell's Point, where they com-

menced building a house of worship, which was the first erected in the city of Baltimore. Though Mr. Asbury was appointed to Baltimore, he by no means confined his labor to that place, but traveled extensively through various parts of Maryland, preaching every day, forming those who had been awakened to a sense of their sin and danger into classes, that they might the more easily help each other to work out their salvation. In consequence of these labors, the work of religion spread among the people.

In the city of New York, it appears that Mr. Rankin met with some opposition in his endeavors to reduce the classes to order and regularity; but his steady perseverance overcame the obstacles thrown in his way, so that he succeeded in his pious designs. He also, as the general assistant, traveled as extensively as practicable, that he might take a general oversight of the work, and see that the rules by which they professed to be governed were suitably enforced.

In the beginning of 1774, the foundation of a house of worship was laid in Baltimore, known by the name of Light Street church, and another in Kent county, about nine miles below Chestertown, called the Kent meeting-house. This latter house was not erected without considerable opposition. After the frame was prepared for raising, some wicked persons came in the night and broke the rafters; but the workmen soon repaired the loss, the house was finished, and the work of the Lord prospered abundantly.

1774. On the 25th of May, of this year, the second conference was held in the city of Philadelphia. From the minutes it appears that seven preachers, namely, William Duke, John Wade, Daniel Ruff, Edward Drumgole, Isaac Rollins, Robert Lindsay, and Samuel Spragg were admitted on trial; and William Watters, Abraham Whitworth, Joseph Yearbry, Philip Gatch, and Philip Ebert were admitted into full connection; most of these, it seems, had been raised up in America during the past two years, for we find no mention of any of their names, except William Watters, Abraham Whitworth, and Joseph Yearbry, among the stations the preceding year. This year, it seems, they adopted the practice introduced into the conferences by Mr. Wesley and which has ever since been followed in this country, namely, that of examining the preachers' characters before the conference; for we find the following question and answer: — "Quest. Are there any objections to any of the preachers? Answer They were examined one by one."

The following are the stations and numbers, and the rules which were agreed upon.

New York, Francis Asbury, to change in three months [with Rankin]; Philadelphia, Thomas Rankin, to change in three months [with Asbury]; Trenton, William Watters; Greenwich, Philip Ebert; Chester, Daniel Ruff, Joseph Yearbry, to change with Wm. Watters and P. Ebert; Kent, Abraham Whitworth; Baltimore, George Shadford, Edward Drumgole, Richard Webster, Robert Lindsay; Frederick, Philip Gatch, William Duke; Norfolk, John King; Brunswick, John Wade, Isaac Rollins, Samuel Spragg.

All the preachers to change at the end of six months.

Question 6. What numbers are there in society?

Answer New York 222; Philadelphia 204; New Jersey 257; Chester 36; Baltimore 738; Frederick 175; Norfolk 73; Brunswick 218; Kent 150; [Total] 2073; (Preachers 17.)

This conference agreed to the following particulars: —

- 1 Every preacher who is received into full connection is to have the use and property of his horse, which any of the circuits may furnish him with.
- 2 Every preacher to be allowed six pounds Pennsylvania currency per quarter, and his traveling charges besides.
- 3 For every assistant to make a general collection at Easter, in the circuits where they labor; to be applied to the sinking of the debts on the houses, and relieving the preachers in want.
- 4 Wherever Thomas Rankin spends his time, he is to be assisted by those circuits.”

From this, it appears that the number had increased 913, being nearly double to what they were the year before; and that they had seven additional preachers. This shows the beneficial influence of enforcing a Scriptural discipline, and adopting an extended method of preaching the gospel by a regular itinerancy.

In the beginning of this year, Messrs. Boardman and Pillmore left the continent for England; the former, who had endeared himself much to the people by his indefatigable labors and Christian deportment, never to return; the latter, Mr. Pillmore, soon after came back, was admitted and ordained as a minister in the Protestant Episcopal Church, in which he lived respected and beloved as a useful minister until his death. Mr. Boardman lived about eight years after his return to Europe, and then died in peace, leaving behind him a name that is “like precious ointment poured forth.” It seems that Mr. Strawbridge did not continue in the regular itinerancy, as we do not find his name in the minutes of conference; the probability is, that he became disaffected on account of the opposition manifested to his administering the ordinances, to which he adhered with great pertinacity.

The Journal of Mr. Asbury for this year shows the steady manner in which he pursued his work. So far from confining himself to the cities of New York and Baltimore, in each of which he was stationed for six months, he traversed the country between the two places, as well as north and south of each; and he everywhere found multitudes who flocked to hear the word, and not a few received it with joy, and were formed into classes under the general rules. His example provoked others to like diligence, though some manifested a reluctance to leave the comforts of a city life for the more fatiguing labors of a country itinerant. The blessed effects of these labors were soon apparent. Among others who contributed largely to the extension of this work, we must not forget to record the labors of Robert Williams,

of whom Mr. Asbury says in his Journal, "He is a singular man, but honest in his intentions, and sincerely engaged for the prosperity of the work." In the same connection he says, "I met brother W. from Virginia, who gave me a great account of the work of God in these parts; five or six hundred souls justified by faith, and five or six circuits formed, so that we now have fourteen circuits in America, and about twenty-two preachers are required to supply them."

It seems that in the early part of this year, Mr. Williams penetrated into Virginia, and finally succeeded in extending the work from Petersburg south, over the Roanoke River, some distance into South Carolina; and from the conference three preachers, John King, John Wade, and Isaac Rollins, were sent to his help. Toward the close of the year, a most remarkable revival of godliness was the effect of their united labors, which terminated as above related by Mr. Asbury.

Such were the indefatigable labors of Mr. Asbury, his constant preaching, his exposures by day and night, that he finally sunk under them, and was obliged to take to his bed, and submit to medical treatment. So feeble was he, that he says, for nine days he was not able even to write in his Journal. "My friends," says he, "were very kind, and expecting my death, they affectionately lamented over me." The Lord, however, blessed the means prescribed for his recovery, so that in about three weeks from the time of his confinement, he was able to resume those labors in which his soul delighted. The latter part of this year he spent in Baltimore and the adjoining settlements, in all which places he enjoyed much of the presence of God, and often witnessed the displays of his power in the awakening and conversion of sinners.

1775. — On the 17th of May of this year, the third conference was held in the city of Philadelphia. Of this conference, Mr. Asbury says that it sat from Wednesday to Friday, "with great harmony and sweetness of temper." This record to the good temper exemplified in the conference is made with a view to show that, notwithstanding some difficulties had occurred between Mr. Rankin and Mr. Asbury, they were not of that serious nature which went to interrupt the harmony of their counsels. To a difference of judgment between them, Mr. Asbury alludes in several places, by which it appears that, in his opinion, Mr. Rankin assumed too much authority over the preachers and people.

In consequence of this assumption of power, Mr. Rankin exposed himself to the censures of many of his brethren, and to the remonstrances of Mr. Asbury, as it tended, in his opinion, to alienate the affections of the people from their preachers. These things laid the foundation for those complaints against Mr. Asbury which were transmitted to Mr. Wesley, and afterward became the cause of much of that uneasiness which will be noticed hereafter. Such errors of judgment may very well exist among the best of men, without at all detracting from their moral worth or Christian character, and may even be overruled by our heavenly Father for the general good of his church. The sternness of character manifested by Mr.

Rankin, while it sustained him in the rigorous exercise of discipline, was not so exactly suited to the genius of the American people as was the more gentle yet equally firm disposition of Mr. Asbury.

The numbers returned in society were 3,148, by which it appears that the increase had been 1,075. Strong symptoms of a war between the colonies and the mother country now began to be manifested in different parts of the American settlements, by which the minds of the people were much agitated on political subjects; and as all the leading Methodist preachers were from England, no little suspicion, however groundless, was entertained respecting the purity of their motives. That most of these were strongly biased in favor of their mother country seems reasonable to suppose; nor are they to be blamed for this feeling, when we consider how natural it is for all men to feel an attachment for the land of their nativity. These suspicions, however, though not yet exemplified in any open acts of hostility, tended in some places to circumscribe the usefulness of the preacher, and to make those of them who came from England turn their attention toward home.

Notwithstanding these unpropitious circumstances, the conference proceeded in their customary work, passing a resolution to raise a yearly collection for general purposes, and making out the stations of the preachers, which were now increased to nineteen in number, distributed among the several circuits. Among other things which they did, was passing the following resolution, which shows their apprehensions respecting the political state of the country, and their pious concern for the prosperity of the work of God. They appointed "a general fast for the prosperity of the work, and for the peace of America, on Tuesday the 18th of July."

This year, Mr. Asbury was appointed to labor in Norfolk, state of Virginia, where, he says, he found "about thirty persons in society, but they had no class meetings," and were therefore in rather a disorderly state. Finding nothing better for a "preaching house than an old shattered building, which had formerly been a play-house," after laboring a few days alternately in Norfolk and Portsmouth, he persuaded the brethren to issue a subscription paper for building a house of worship, which, however, went tardily on for the present. As usual, Mr. Asbury omitted no opportunity of doing good to the souls of the people; and for this purpose he made frequent excursions into the country, where he generally found a people willing to hear the word of reconciliation. Having been invited to visit Brunswick circuit, where the Lord was pouring out his Spirit upon the labors of Mr. Shadford, on the 2d of November he arrived there, and says, "God is at work in this part of the country, and my soul catches the holy fire." On meeting with Mr. Shadford, he says, "My spirit is much united to him, and our meeting was like that of David and Jonathan."

There was indeed a remarkable revival of the work of God in this part of the country, chiefly through the instrumentality of Mr. Shadford. Trembling and shaking would seize upon sinners under the word, and in some instances they were so affected as to fall lifeless upon

the floor or upon the ground. These were strange appearances in this country, and some, of course, looked on with astonishment at these manifest displays of the power and grace of God. The consequence of this great and extensive revival was an addition to the societies of upward of 1800 members.

Mr. Robert Williams, who was among the first Methodist preachers that visited Virginia, had married, and located at a place between Norfolk and Suffolk, where he ended his days in peace, on the 26th September 1775. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. Asbury, who says of him, that he “has been a very useful man, and the Lord gave him many seals to his ministry. Perhaps no man in America has been an instrument of awakening so many souls as God has awakened by him.”

As the revival above spoken of was one of the first of the kind in this part of the country, and was, in many respects, very remarkable in its character, I think it proper to give here an account of it as I find it inserted in Mr. Asbury’s Journal. The writer of this account was the Rev. Mr. Jarratt, a minister of the English Church, who participated largely in that revival, and contributed by his labors to its advancement, by favoring the Methodist preachers, and administering the ordinances to such as desired them. Had all the clergy of that day manifested a kindred spirit, how much more extensively would the work have prevailed!

**A BRIEF NARRATIVE OF THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN VIRGINIA. IN
A LETTER TO A FRIEND.**

“Dear Sir, — You was pleased, when in Virginia, to desire a narrative of the work of God in these parts. I shalt give you matter of fact, in a plain, artless dress; relating only what I have myself seen and heard, and what I have received from men on whose judgment and veracity I can fully depend.

“That you may have a full view of the whole, I shall go back as far as my first settlement in this parish. August 29, 1763, I was chosen rector of B., in the county of D., in Virginia. Ignorance of the things of God, profaneness, and irreligion, then prevailed among all ranks and degrees; so that I doubt if even the form of godliness was to be found in any one family of this large and populous parish. I was a stranger to the people: my doctrines were quite new to them; and were neither preached nor believed by any other clergyman, so far as I could learn, throughout the province.

“My first work was to explain the depravity of our nature, our fall in Adam, and all the evils consequent thereon; the impossibility of being delivered from them by any thing which we could do, an the necessity of a living faith, in order to our obtaining help from God. While I continued to insist upon these truths, and on the absolute necessity of being born again, no small outcry was raised against this way, as well as against him that taught it. But, by the help of God, I continued to witness the same both to small and great.

“The common people, however, frequented the church more constantly, and in larger numbers than usual. Some were affected at times, so as to drop a tear. But still for a year or

more, I perceived no lasting effect, only a few were not altogether so profane as before. I could discover no heartfelt convictions of sin, no deep or lasting impression of their lost estate. Indeed, I have reason to believe that some have been a good deal alarmed at times; but they were shy of speaking to me (thinking it would be presumption) till their convictions wore off.

“But in the year 1765, the power of God was more sensibly felt by a few. These were constrained to apply to me, and inquire, ‘What they must do to be saved?’ And now I began to preach abroad, as well as in private houses; and to meet little companies in the evenings, and converse freely on divine things. I believe some were this year converted to God, and thenceforth the work of God slowly went on.

“The next year I became acquainted with Mr. M’R., rector of a neighboring parish; and we joined hand in hand in the great work. He labored much therein, and not in vain. A remarkable power attended his preaching, and many were truly converted to God, not only in his parish, but in other parts where he was called to labor.

“In the years 1770 and 1771, we had a more considerable outpouring of the Spirit, at a place in my parish called White Oak. It was here first I formed the people into a society, that they might assist and strengthen each other. The good effects of this were soon apparent. Convictions were deep and lasting; and not only knowledge, but faith, and love, and holiness continually increased.

“In the year 1772, the revival was more considerable, and extended itself in some places for fifty or sixty miles around. It increased still more in the following year, and several sinners were truly converted to God. In spring, 1774, it was more remarkable than ever. The word preached was attended with such energy that many were pierced to the heart. Tears fell plentifully from the eyes of the hearers, and some were constrained to cry out. A goodly number were gathered in this year, both in my parish and in many of the neighboring counties. I formed several societies out of those which were convinced or converted; and I found it a happy means of building up those that had believed, and preventing the rest from losing their convictions.

In the counties of Sussex and Brunswick, the work from the year 1773 was chiefly carried on by the labors of the people called Methodists. The first of them who appeared in these parts was Mr. R. W., who, you know, was a plain, artless, indefatigable preacher of the gospel: he was greatly blessed in detecting the hypocrite, razing false foundations, and stirring believers up to press after a present salvation from the remains of sin. He came to my house in the month of March, in the year 1773. The next year others of his brethren came, who gathered many societies both in this neighborhood, and in other places, as far as North Carolina. They now began to ride the circuit, and to take care of the societies already formed, which was rendered a happy means both of deepening and spreading the work of God.

I earnestly recommended it to my societies, to pray much for the prosperity of Sion, and for a larger outpouring of the Spirit of God. They did so, and not in vain. We have had a time of refreshing indeed a revival of religion, as great as perhaps ever was known, in country places, in so short a time. It began in the latter end of the year 1775; but was more considerable in January 1776, the beginning of the present year. It broke out nearly at the same time, at three places not far from each other. Two of these places are in my parish, the other in Amelia county, which had for many years been notorious for carelessness, profaneness, and immoralities of all kinds. Gaming, swearing, drunkenness, and the like, were their delight, while things sacred were their scorn and contempt. However, some time last year, one of my parish (now a local preacher) appointed some meetings among them, and after a while, induced a small number to join in society. And though few, if any of them, were then believers, yet this was a means of preparing the way of the Lord.

“As there were few converts in my parish the last year, I was sensible a change of preachers was wanting. This has often revived the work of God; and so it did at the present time. Last December, one of the Methodist preachers, Mr. S., preached several times at the three places above mentioned. He confirmed the doctrine I had long preached; and to many of them not in vain. And while their ears were opened by novelty, God set his word home upon their hearts. Many sinners were powerfully convinced, and mercy! mercy! was their cry. In January, the news of convictions and conversions were common; and the people of God were inspired with new life and vigor by the happiness of others. But in a little time they were made strongly sensible that they themselves stood in need of a deeper work in their hearts than they had yet experienced. And while those were panting and groaning for pardon, these were entreating God, with strong cries and tears, to save them from the remains of inbred sin, to ‘sanctify them throughout in spirit, soul, and body;’ so to ‘circumcise their hearts,’ that they might ‘love God with all their hearts,’ and serve him with all their strength. “During this whole winter, the Spirit of the Lord was poured out in a manner we had not seen before. In almost every assembly might be seen signal instances of divine power, more especially in the meetings of the classes. Here many old stout-hearted sinners felt the force of truth, and their eyes were open to discover their guilt and danger. The shaking among the dry bones was increased from week to week: nay, sometimes ten or twelve have been deeply convinced of sin in one day. Some of these were in great distress, and when they were questioned concerning the state of their souls, were scarce able to make any reply but by weeping and falling on their knees, before all the class, and earnestly soliciting the prayers of God’s people. And from time to time he has answered these petitions, set the captives at liberty, and enabled them to praise a pardoning God in the midst of his people. Numbers of old and gray-headed, of middle-aged persons, of youth, yea, of little children, were the subjects of this work. Several of the latter we have seen painfully concerned for the wickedness of their lives, and the corruption of their nature. We have instances of this sort from eight

or nine years old. Some of these children are exceeding happy in the love of God; and they speak of the whole process of the work of God, of their convictions, the time when, and the manner how they obtained deliverance, with such clearness as might convince an atheist that this is nothing else but the great power of God.

Many in these parts, who have long neglected the means of grace, now flocked to hear, not only me and the traveling preachers, but also the exhorters and leaders. And the Lord showed he is not confined to man; for whether there was preaching or not, his power was still sensible among the people. And at their meetings for prayer, some have been in such distress that they have continued therein for five or six hours. And it has been found that these prayer-meetings were singularly useful in promoting the work of God.

“The outpouring of the Spirit which began here, soon extended itself, more or less, through most of the circuit, which is regularly attended by the traveling preachers, and which takes in a circumference of between four and five hundred miles. And the work went on with a pleasing progress till the beginning of May, when they held a quarterly meeting at B’s chapel, in my parish. This stands at the lower line of the parish, thirty miles from W.’s chapel, at the upper line of it, where the work began. At this meeting one might truly say the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain of divine influence poured down for more than forty days. The work now became more deep than ever, extended wider, and was swifter in its operations. Many were savingly converted to God, and in a very short time, not only in my parish, but through several parts of Brunswick, Sussex, Prince George, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, and Amelia counties.

“The second day of the quarterly meeting a love-feast was held. As soon as it began, the power of the Lord came down on the assembly like a rushing mighty wind; and it seemed as if the whole house was filled with the presence of God. A flame kindled and ran from heart to heart. Many were deeply convinced of sin; many mourners were filled with consolation: and many believers were so overwhelmed with love that they could not doubt but God had enabled them to love him with all their heart.

“When the love-feast was ended the doors were opened. Many who had stayed without then came in; and beholding the anguish of some, and the rejoicing of others, were filled with astonishment; and not long after with trembling apprehensions of their own danger. Several of them, prostrating themselves before God, cried aloud for mercy. And the convictions which then began in many, have terminated in a happy and lasting change.

“The multitudes that attended on this occasion, returning home all alive to God, spread the flame through their respective neighborhoods, which ran from family to family; so that within four weeks several hundreds found the peace of God. And scarce any conversation was to be heard throughout the circuit, but concerning the things of God: either the complainings of the prisoners, groaning under the spirit of bondage unto fear, or the rejoicing of those whom the Spirit of adoption taught to cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The unhappy disputes

between England and her colonies, which just before had engrossed all our conversation, seemed now in most companies to be forgot, while things of far greater importance lay so near the heart. I have gone into many, and not small companies, wherein there did not appear to be one careless soul; and the far greater part seemed perfectly happy in a clear sense of the love of God.

One of the doctrines, as you know, which we particularly insist upon, is that of a present salvation; a salvation not only from the guilt and power, but also from the root of sin; a cleansing from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God; a going on to perfection, which we sometimes define by loving God with all our hearts. Several who had believed were deeply sensible of their want of this. I have seen both men and women, who had long been happy in a sense of God's pardoning love, as much convicted on account of the remains of sin in their hearts, and as much distressed for a total deliverance from them, as ever I saw any for justification. Their whole cry was, 'O that I now the rest might know, Believe and enter in; Now, Saviour, now, the power bestow, And let me cease from sin.'

And I have been present when they believed that God answered this prayer, and bestowed this blessing upon them. I have conversed with them several times since, and have found them thoroughly devoted to God. They all testify that they have received the gift instantaneously, and by simple faith. We have sundry witnesses of this perfect love, who are above all suspicion. I have known the men and their communication for many years, and have ever found them zealous for the cause of God: men of sense and integrity, patterns of piety and humility, whose testimony therefore may be depended on.

"It has been frequently observed, that there never was any remarkable revival of religion, but some degree of enthusiasm was mingled with it — some wild fire mixed with the sacred flame. It may be doubted whether this is not unavoidable in the nature of things. And notwithstanding all the care we have taken, this work has not been quite free from it; but it never rose to any considerable height, neither was of long continuance. In some meetings there has not been that decency and order observed which I could have wished. Some of our assemblies resembled the congregation of the Jews at the laying the foundation of the second temple in the days of Ezra — some wept for grief, others shouted for joy, so that it was hard to distinguish one from the other. So it was here: the mourning and distress were so blended with the voice of joy and gladness that it was hard to distinguish the one from the other, till the voice of joy prevailed: the people shouting with a great shout, so that it might be heard afar off.

"To give you, a fuller insight into this great work of God, I subjoin an extract from two or three of my letters.

"To the Rev. Mr. M'R.

"May 3, 1776.

“Rev. and Dear Brother, — Yesterday I preached at B.’s chapel to a crowded and attentive audience. Afterward the Methodists held their love-feast: during which as many as pleased rose, one after another, and spoke in few words of the goodness of God to their souls. Before three had done speaking, (although they spoke but few words,) you might see a solemn sense of the presence of God visible on every countenance, while tears of sorrow or joy were flowing from many eyes. Several testified the consolation they had received: some believed they were perfected in love. When the passions of the people were rising too high, and breaking through all restraint, the preacher gently checked them by giving out a few verses of a hymn. When most of the congregation went away, some were so distressed with a sense of their sins that they could no be persuaded to leave the place. Some lively Christians stayed with them, and continued in prayer for the space of two hours, till fifteen mourners were enabled to rejoice in God their Saviour. And some careless creatures of the politer sort, who would needs go in to see what this strange thing meant, felt an unusual power, so that like Saul among the prophets, they fell down on their knees, and cried for mercy among the rest. O may they still continue to pray, till God has given them another heart!”

“May 3, 1776

“Last night three or four score of my neighbors met together to keep a watchnight: at which it is the custom to spend three or four hours in religious exercises, and to break up at twelve. Such was the distress of those that were convinced of sin that they continued in prayer all night, and till two hours after sunrise. Here also fourteen or fifteen received a sense of pardon: so that in two days thirty of my own parish have been justified, besides others of other parishes.

“Indeed, I do not take it for granted that all are justified who think they are so. Some, I fear, are mistaken. But I shall judge better of this when I see the fruits.”

“May 7, 1776

“The work of God still increases among us: I believe, within these eight days, more than forty here have been filled with joy and peace in believing. Of these I have had an account; but there may be many more. And several, who have been justified some time, believe God has blessed them with perfect love.

“I have no doubt but the work now carrying on is genuine: yet there were some circumstances attending it which I disliked: such as loud outcries, tremblings, fallings, convulsions. But I am better reconciled since I read President Edwards on that head, who observes, ‘That wherever these most appear, there is always the greatest and the deepest work.’

“There is another thing which has given me much pain: the praying of several at one and the same time. Sometimes five or six, or more, have been praying all at once, in several parts of the room, for distressed persons. Others were speaking by way of exhortation, so that the assembly appeared to be all in confusion, and must seem, to one at a little distance, more like a drunken rabble than the worshippers of God, I was afraid this was not doing all things

in decency and order. Indeed Dr. Edwards defends this also. But yet I am not satisfied concerning it. I had heard of it, but never saw it till Sunday evening. But this is a delicate point. It requires much wisdom to allay the wild, and not damp the sacred fire.

“The first appearance of any thing of the kind at my chapel was last Saturday night. I was not there, but a young man who studies at my house was. He is grave, prudent, and solidly religious, without the least tincture of enthusiasm. He met the society there in the afternoon, and would have returned home, but that many who were in great distress begged him, and some others, to stay and pray with them. They continued in prayer the whole night, during which about twelve were set at liberty. But, notwithstanding all they could do, there were often two, three, or more speaking at one time.

“I heard of this the next day, when I was at church, and hastened thence to the chapel. Some hundreds were assembled there, and were in much confusion when I went in. I went into the pulpit and began to sing, adding short exhortations and prayers. The confusion ceased: several spirits were revived, and some mourners comforted.

“Since that evening this kind of confusion has never been known in my neighborhood. It continued longer in other places; but for some time has been totally gone. But as this abated, the work of conviction and conversion usually abated too. Yet, blessed be God, it still goes on, though not with such rapidity. I have heard but of two or three that found peace for three weeks; whereas some time ago seldom a week passed, but I could hear of eight or nine; sometimes between twenty and thirty at one meeting.

“I have chiefly spoken of what was done in my parish. But that you may know a little of what was done elsewhere, I subjoin an extract from the letters of two local preachers, in the county of Sussex.’

“July 29, 1776

“Rev Sir, — With unspeakable pleasure I acquaint you of the glorious revival of religion in our parts. It broke out at our last quarterly meeting, and has since wonderfully spread throughout the circuit. The time seems to be coming when we shall not need to teach every man his neighbor to know the Lord: for they daily know him from the least to the greatest, from little children to men of fourscore. Above seven years have I been exhorting my neighbors; but very few would hear. Now, blessed be God, there are few that will not hear. It is no strange thing for two or three to find the Lord at a class meeting: and at a Sunday meeting, although there was no preacher, ten, fifteen, yea, nearly twenty have been converted. At a place near me, thirty have found the Lord within eight days. It is common with us for men and women to fall down as dead under an exhortation, but many more under prayer, perhaps twenty a time. And some that have not fallen to the earth have shown the same distress, wringing their hands, smiting their breasts, and begging all to pray for them. With these the work is generally quick; some getting through in less than a week, some in two or three days; some in one, two, or three hours. Nay, we have an instance of one that was so

indifferent as to leave her brethren at prayers and go to bed. But all at once she screamed out under a sense of her lost estate, and in less than fifteen minutes rejoiced in God her Saviour. And, blessed be God, many of these retain a sense of his favor. Many, who a few weeks ago were despisers and scoffers, are now happy in the Lord. Many old Christians, who were always full of doubts and fears, now walk in the light of his countenance. Some have a clear witness in themselves that they have given their whole hearts to God. O may God carry on his work among us, until we are all swallowed up in love!

T. S.’

“Mr. S. lives two-and twenty miles from me: the writer of the following letter about thirty.

“July 29, 1776

“Rev. Sir, — On June the 9th, we had a large congregation. I spoke on, “No man can serve two masters.” Several appeared to be much distressed, two women in particular. We spent above an hour in prayer for them, and they arose in peace. When we met the class, we suffered all that desired it to stay. The leader only put a question or two to each member. This was scarce ended, when the fire of God’s love was kindled. Praises hung on the lips of many; and several cried out, “What must we do to be saved?” Thus it swiftly went on; every now and then one rising with faith in Jesus. Surely this was one of the days of heaven! Such a day I never expected to see in time. While we were met, one I. W. was observed to be looking through the crack of the door which being opened, he came with it, and, being unable to stand, fell on the floor quite helpless. But in two or three hours he rose and praised a pardoning God while one of the class who had been justified some time, received a blessing greatly superior to any thing he had known before. We have reason to believe that, on this day, fifteen were enabled to believe in Jesus.

“Saturday, June 15. — I was speaking to the class, and one found peace to her soul. Sunday 16, I spoke from “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,” to four or five hundred people. This was also a day of Pentecost. Convictions seized on numbers, who wrestled with God till their souls were set at liberty. A young woman told me, “She heard that many people fell down, and she would come to help them up.” This she said in scorn. She came accordingly. The power of God soon seized her, and she wanted helping up herself. But it was not long before the Spirit of grace helped her, by giving her faith in Christ. We believe twenty souls found peace this day. O may we see many such days!

“July 7. — I spoke to a large congregation. Afterward was going to give out a hymn, when one was so powerfully struck that he could not hold a joint still, and roared aloud for mercy. I immediately went to prayer; the cries of the people all the time greatly increasing. After prayer, B. T., lately a great opposer, jumped up, and began to praise God, with a countenance so altered, that those who beheld him were filled with astonishment. Our meeting continued from twelve at noon till twelve at night; during which, God raised up about fifteen more witnesses.

“The Thursday following, six of those who were convinced on Sunday, found peace in believing. We hear of many others converted in the neighborhood, several of whom were strong opposers; and some hoary-headed ones, who had been strict Pharisees from their youth up.

“Sunday 21. — We had a large and attentive auditory, and the power of the Lord prevailed. The next day I was much tempted to doubt, whether I was sent of God to preach or not? I prayed earnestly to the Lord that he would satisfy me, and that he would keep all false fire from among us. Afterward I preached. While I was speaking, a mother and her daughter were so struck with conviction that they trembled every joint; but before I concluded, both found peace. Glory be to God.

“I am, &c., J. D.’

“God has made examples of several opposers — examples not of justice, but of mercy. Some of them came to the assembly with hearts full of rancor against the people of God, so that, had it been in their power, they would have dragged them away to prison, if not to death. But unexpectedly their stubborn hearts were bowed down, being pierced with the arrows of the Almighty. In a moment they were filled with distress and anguish, their laughter turned into mourning, and their cursing into prayer. And frequently in less than a week their heaviness has been turned into joy. Of this sort are several of our most zealous and circumspect walkers at this day. A goodly number of these are rich in this world; yet they are now brought so low that they are willing to be taught by all, and to be the servants of all.

“A gentleman in this parish, in particular, had much opposed and contradicted; he was fully persuaded that all outward appearances, either of distress or joy, were mere deceit. But as he was walking to his mill, about half a mile from his house, deep conviction fell upon him. The terrors of the Lord beset him around about, and distress and anguish got hold upon him. When he came to the mill and found no one there, he took that opportunity of prostrating himself before God, and of pouring out his soul in his presence. As his distress was great, his cries were loud, and his prayer importunate. The Lord heard him, and set his soul at liberty before he left the place. And the power which came upon him was so great, that it seemed as if his whole frame was dissolving.

“Upon the whole, this has been a great, a deep, a swift, an extensively glorious work. Both the nature and manner of it have been nearly the same, wherever its benign influence reached. Where the greatest work was, where the greatest number of souls have been convinced and converted to God, there have been the most outcries, tremblings, convulsions, and all sorts of external signs. I took all the pains I could that these might be kept within bounds, that our good might not be evil spoken of. This I did, not by openly inveighing against them in the public assembly, but by private advices to local preachers and others, as opportunity would permit. This method had its desired effect, without putting a sword into the hands

of the wicked. Wherever the contrary method has been taken, where these things have been publicly opposed, when they have been spoken against in promiscuous congregations, the effect has always been this: the men of the world have been highly gratified, and the children of God deeply wounded. The former have plumed themselves as though they were the men who kept within due bounds, and those that had 'made so much ado about religion,' were no better than hot-brained enthusiasts. I cannot but think this has a great tendency to hinder the work of God. Indeed, if we thought that God wrought every thing irresistibly, we should not fear this. But we know the contrary: we know that as some things promote, so others hinder his work. I grant means should be used to prevent all indecency; but they should be used with great caution and tenderness, that the cure may be effected, if possible, without damping the work of God.

"With regard to the inward work, there has been a great variety as to the length, and depth, and circumstances of the convictions in different persons; but all in general have been at first alarmed with a sense of the multitude and heinousness of their sins; with an awful view of the wrath of God, and certain destruction, if they persisted therein. Hence they betook themselves to prayer, and as time permitted, to the use of all other means of grace; although deeply sensible of the vileness of their performances, and the total insufficiency of all they could do to merit the pardon of one sin, or deserve the favor of God. They were next convinced of their unbelief, and that faith in Christ is the only condition of justification. They continued thus waiting upon the Lord, till he spoke peace to their souls. This he usually did in one moment, in a clear and satisfactory manner, so that all their griefs and anxieties vanished away, and they were filled with joy and peace in believing. Some indeed have had their burdens removed so that they felt no condemnation. And yet, they could not say they were forgiven. But they could not be satisfied with this. They continued instant in prayer till they knew the Lamb of God had taken away their sins.

"Most of these had been suddenly convinced of sin: but with some it was otherwise. Without any sense or their guilt, they were brought to use the means of grace by mere dint of persuasion: and afterward they were brought by degrees to see themselves, and their want of a Saviour. But before they found deliverance they have had as deep a sense of their helpless misery as others. One in my parish was a remarkable instance of this. He was both careless and profane to a great degree; and remained quite unconcerned, while many of his companions were sorrowing after God, or rejoicing in his love. One of his acquaintance advised him to seek the Lord. He said, 'I see no necessity for it as yet. When I do I will seek him as well as others.' His friend persuaded him to try for one week, watching against sin, and going by himself every day. He did so: and though he was quite stupid when he began, yet before the end of the week, he was thoroughly sensible of the load of in, and is now happy in God. "If you ask, 'How stands the case with those that have been the subjects of the late work?' I have the pleasure to inform you, I have not heard of any one apostate yet. It is true, many,

since their first joy abated, have given way to doubts and fears, have had their confidence in God much shaken, and have got into much heaviness. Several have passed through this, and are now confirmed in the ways of God. Others are in it still; and chiefly those over whom Satan had gained an advantage, by hurrying them into irregular warmth, or into expressions not well guarded. I have seen some of these in great distress, and just ready to cast away hope.

“I have a great deal upon my hands at present, and have little time either to write or read. The difficulties and temptations of the lately converted are so many and various, that I am obliged to be in as many places as I can for now is the critical hour. A man of zeal, though with little knowledge or experience, may be an instrument of converting souls. But after they are converted, he will have need of much knowledge, much prudence and experience, to provide proper food and physic for the several members, according to their state, habit, and constitution. This at present seems in a great measure to devolve upon me. And though I have been twenty years in the Lord’s service, yet I find I am quite unequal to the task. However, I will do what I can and may the Lord bless my endeavors!

“The enemy is busy, night and day, in sowing the tares of division among the wheat. And in some places he has prevailed so far as to plunge some of them in the water. In other places little feuds and animosities arise, to grieve the preachers, and damp the spirits of the people. On these occasions, they commonly apply to me; and all is well, at least for a season. — When I consider what it is to watch over souls, and how much labor and pains it implies, to discharge it in any degree, I cannot but cry out with the apostle, ‘Who is sufficient for these things!’

“However, upon the whole, things are in as flourishing a condition, as can reasonably be expected, considering what great numbers, of various capacities and stations, have been lately added to the societies.

But after all, a great, part of Virginia is still in a very dark and deplorable condition. This province contains sixty-two counties and the late work has reached only seven or eight of them. Nor has it been universal even in these, but chiefly in the circuit which is regularly visited by the preachers. In this alone very many hundreds have in a few months been added to the Lord. And some are adding still. May he continue to pour out his Spirit upon us, and increase the number of the faithful every day!

“Our highest gratitude is due to our gracious God; for he hath done marvellous things! In a short time he hath wrought a great work: and let who will speak against it, it is evident, beyond all contradiction, that many open and profligate sinners, of all sorts, have been effectually changed into pious, uniform ChristiAnswer So that every thinking man must allow that God hath been with us of a truth, and that his ‘glory dwells in our land.’ I am your sincere friend, and brother in Christ

“To Mr. M. R. “D. J., September 10, 1776.”

The following letter, which relates to the same work, was written some time after.

“To The Rev. Mr. Wesley

“June 24, 1778

“Rev. and Dear Sir, — You have the narrative of the Rev. Mr. J. I send this as a supplement to it.

“At our little conference held in Philadelphia, May 1775, Mr. S. was appointed assistant for Brunswick circuit, in Virginia. He found there about eight hundred joined together, but in a very confused manner. Many of them did not understand the nature of meeting in class; and many of the classes had no leader. He resolved to begin in good earnest; and the preachers with him were like-minded. Their constant custom was, as soon as preaching was over, to speak to all the members of the society, one by one. If the society was large, one preacher spoke to a part, and he that came next, to the rest. By this means they learned more of our doctrine and discipline in a year than in double the time before. The fruit soon appeared the congregations swiftly increased, and many were pricked to the heart. Many that were a little affected desired to see the nature of meeting in class: and while one was speaking, either to those that were groaning for redemption, or those who had found peace with God, these were frequently cut to the heart, and sometimes enabled on the spot to praise a pardoning God. Nay, sometimes four, five, or six found peace with God before the meeting was over.

“The work of God thus increasing on every side, more preachers were soon wanting: and God raised up several young men, who were exceedingly useful as local preachers.

“After Mr. S. had been about eight mouths in the circuit, Mr. J. desired his parish might be included in it, that all who chose it might have the privilege of meeting in class, and being members of the society. He soon saw the salutary effects. Many that had but small desires before began to be much alarmed, and labored earnestly after eternal life. In a little time numbers were deeply awakened, and many tasted of the pardoning love of God. In a few months Mr. J. saw more fruit of his labors than he had done for many years. And he went on with the preachers hand in hand, both in doctrine and discipline.

“When Mr. S. took an account of the societies, before he came to the conference in 1776, they contained two thousand six hundred and sixty-four persons; to whom eighteen hundred were added in one year. Above a thousand of these had found peace with God; many of whom thirsted for all the mind that was in Christ. And divers believed God had ‘circumcised their heart to love him with all their heart, and with all their soul.’

“This revival of religion spread through fourteen counties in Virginia, and through Bute and Halifax counties in North Carolina. At the same time we had a blessed outpouring of the Spirit in several counties bordering upon Maryland.

“Our conference was held at Baltimore Town, on the 22d of May. Here I received a letter from Mr. J., part of which I insert.

“May 11, 1776

“I praise God for his goodness, in so plentifully pouring out of his Spirit on men, women, and children. I believe threescore, in and near my parish, have believed, through grace, since the quarterly meeting. Such a work I never saw with my eyes. Sometimes twelve, sometimes fifteen, find the Lord at one class-meeting. I am just returned from meeting two classes. Much of the power of God was in each. — My dear partner is now happy in God her Saviour. I clap my hands exulting, and praise God. Blessed be the Lord, that ever he sent you and your brethren into this part of his vineyard! Many children, from eight to twelve years old, are now under strong convictions; and some of them are savingly converted to God. I was much comforted this morning at the W. O. Chapel. The people there are of a truly teachable spirit; those particularly who profess to have obtained the pure love of God, They are as little children. When you consider how the work is spreading on every side, you will readily excuse me from being at your conference.”

Such a work as this, perhaps unexampled in the history of these provinces, at such a time, when they were upon the eve of a bloody contest, was matter of great encouragement to all concerned, as well as of lively gratitude to Almighty God. In the course of the summer, Mr. Rankin paid a visit to this part of the country. Being somewhat stern in his manners, and not accustomed to witness such awful displays of the power of God, he made an effort to still the people; and though he succeeded, in some measure, while in his presence, yet no sooner had he withdrawn from among them, than they broke forth in loud cries for mercy, while others shouted aloud the praises of God; and although some tincture of enthusiasm appeared among the young converts, in giving vent to the joys of their first love, it is evident that in general it was a genuine work of God, as was afterward manifested by its fruits.

The following appears to be Mr. Rankin’s own account of these wonderful things: —

“Sunday 30. I was comforted by the sight of my dear brother S. But I was weak in body through riding so far in extreme heat, and much exercised in mind and did not know how I should be able to go through the labor of the day. We went to the chapel at ten, where I had liberty of mind and strength of body beyond my expectation. After preaching I met the society, and was more relieved both in body and mind. At four in the afternoon I preached again, from ‘I set before thee an open door, and none can shut it.’ I had gone through about two-thirds of my discourse, and was bringing the words home to the present now, when such power descended that hundreds fell to the ground, and the house seemed to shake with the presence of God. The chapel was full of white and black, and many were without that could not get in. Look wherever we would, we saw nothing but streaming eyes, and faces bathed in tears; and heard nothing but groans and strong cries after God and the Lord Jesus Christ. My voice was drowned amid the groans and prayers of the congregation. I then sat down in the pulpit; and both Mr. S. and I were so filled with the divine presence that we could only say, This is none other than the house of God! this is the gate of heaven! Husbands

were inviting their wives to go to heaven, wives their husbands: parents their children, and children their parents: brothers their sisters, and sisters their brothers. In short, those who were happy in God themselves were for bringing all their friends to him in their arms. This mighty effusion of the Spirit continued for above an hour: in which time many were awakened, some found peace with God, and others his pure love. We attempted to speak or sing again and again: but no sooner we began than our voices were drowned. It was with much difficulty that we at last persuaded the people, as night drew on, to retire to their own homes.

“Tuesday, July 2. I rode with Mr. S. to Mr. J.’s who, with Mrs. I., received us with open arms. I preached the next day, not far from his house, to a deeply attentive congregation. Many were much affected at the preaching; but far more at the meeting of the society. Mr. J. himself was constrained to praise God aloud for his great love to him and to his people.

“Sunday 7. I preached at W.’s chapel, about twenty miles from Mr. J.’s. I intended to preach near the house, under the shade of some large trees. But the rain made it impracticable. The house was greatly crowded, and four or five hundred stood at the doors and windows, and listened with unabated attention. I preached from Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones: “And there was a great shaking.” I was obliged to stop again and again, and beg of the people to compose themselves. But they could not: some on their knees, and some on their faces, were crying mightily to God all the time I was preaching. Hundreds of Negroes were among them, with the tears streaming down their faces. The same power we found in meeting the society, and many were enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable. In the cool of the evening I preached out of doors, and many found an uncommon blessing.

“Every day the ensuing week I preached to large and attentive congregations. Indeed the weather was violently hot, and the fatigue of riding, and preaching so often, was great. But God made up all this to me by his comfortable presence. Thursday 11, I preached to a large congregation at the preaching house near Mr. J.’s. After preaching at several places on Friday and Saturday, on Sunday, 14, I came to Mr. B.’s, where I preached and met the society. The congregation was, as before, abundantly larger than the chapel could contain. And we had almost such a day as fourteen days ago: only attended with a more deep and solemn work. What a work is God working in this corner of Mr. J.’s parish! It seemed as if all the country for nine or ten miles around were ready to turn to God.

“In the evening I rode to Mr. S.’s, and found a whole family fearing and loving God. Mr. S., a sensible and judicious man, had been for many years a justice of the peace. By hearing the truth as it is in Jesus, he and his wife first, and then all his children, had attained that peace that passeth all understanding. He observed, ‘How amazing the change was which had been lately wrought in the place where he lived! That before the Methodists came into these parts, when he was called by his office to attend the court, there was nothing but drunkenness,

cursing, swearing, and fighting most of the time the court sat: whereas now nothing is heard but prayer and praise, and conversing about God, and the things of God.’

“Monday 15. I rode toward North Carolina. In every place the congregations were large, and received the word with all readiness of mind. I know not that I have spent such a week since I came to America. I saw everywhere such a simplicity in the people, with such a vehement thirst after the word of God, that I frequently preached and continued in prayer till I was hardly able to stand. Indeed there was no getting away from them while I was able to speak one sentence for God.

“Sunday 21. I preached at Roanoke chapel, to more than double of what the house would contain. In general, the white people were within the chapel, and the black people without. The windows being all open, every one could hear, and hundreds felt the word of God. Many were bathed in tears, and others rejoicing with joy unspeakable. When the society met, many could not refrain from praising God aloud. I preached to a large company in the afternoon, and concluded the day with prayer and thanksgiving.

“Tuesday 23. I crossed the Roanoke River, and preached at a chapel in North Carolina. And I preached every day to very large and deeply attentive congregations: although not without much labor and pain, through the extreme heat of the weather.

On Tuesday 30 was our quarterly meeting. I scarce ever remember such a season. No chapel or preaching house in Virginia would have contained one-third of the congregation. Our friends, knowing this, had contrived to shade with boughs of trees a space that would contain two or three thousand persons. Under this, wholly screened from the rays of the sun, we held our general love-feast. It began between eight and nine on Wednesday morning, and continued till noon. Many testified that they had ‘redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins.’ And many were enabled to declare that it had ‘cleansed them from all sin.’ So clear, so full, so strong was their testimony, that while some were speaking their experience hundreds were in tears, and others vehemently crying to God for pardon or holiness.

About eight our watch-night began. Mr. J. preached an excellent sermon: the rest of the preachers exhorted and prayed with divine energy. Surely, for the work wrought on these two days, many will praise God to all eternity. T. R.”

We have alluded to the suspicions which had been awakened in the minds of some respecting the designs of the English preachers. Mr. Wesley, who was ever alive to every thing which would seem to have a bearing upon the work of God, foreseeing the difficulties which would be likely to arise in America, on account of the approaching hostilities, thus addressed them in a letter dated,

“London, March 1, 1775.

“My Dear Brethren, — You were never in your lives in so critical a situation as you are at this time. It is your part to be peace-makers: to be loving and tender to all; but to addict

yourselves to no party. In spite of all solicitations, of rough or smooth words, say not one word against one or the other side. Keep yourselves pure; do all you can to help and soften all; but beware how you adopt another's jar.

"See that you act in full union with each other: this is of the utmost consequence. Not only let there be no bitterness or anger, but no shyness or coldness between you. Mark all those that would set one against the other. Some such will never be wanting. But give them no countenance; rather ferret them out, and drag them into open day."

This certainly was good and seasonable advice, admirably suited to the times.

We have already alluded to a dissatisfaction expressed by Mr. Asbury of the spirit and conduct of Mr. Rankin: and it is certain, from sundry notices in his Journal, that he suspected strongly that Mr. R. had misrepresented him to Mr. Wesley. What the subject of difference was precisely, we cannot tell but it is manifest from the following extract of a letter from Mr. Wesley to Mr. Rankin, that the suspicions of Mr. Asbury were well founded. In this letter, which is dated May 19, 1775, he says, "I doubt not but brother Asbury and you will part friends. I shall hope to see him at the conference. He is quite an upright man. I apprehend he will go through his work more cheerfully when he is within a little distance from me." But in a subsequent letter under date of July 28, of the same year, we find the following words "I rejoice over honest Francis Asbury, and hope he will no more enter into temptation." To what temptation Mr. Wesley alludes we know not; but to whatever particular allusion is made, we are constrained to believe, from the known integrity of heart, and uprightness of deportment ever exemplified by Mr. Asbury, there was no just cause for alarm on his account; and hence we are confirmed in the opinion before expressed, that either Mr. Rankin or some one else, probably from jealousy of the growing reputation of Mr. Asbury, had written to his disadvantage, and had even advised Mr. Wesley to call him home. It is due to truth, and to the character of Mr. Asbury, to say, that whatever representations might have been made disparaging to his character, they were without foundation, as has been proved by every act of Mr. Asbury's most laborious, self-denying, and useful life. And if the difficulties between him and Mr. Rankin arose merely from difference of judgment in regard to the general plan of procedure, the final result proves that the former was in the right; for he lived to outride the storm and to triumph over all his enemies, as the issue of his plans and labors.

1776. On the 24th of May of this year, the annual conference was held for the first time in the city of Baltimore. In consequence of the great revival of religion above detailed, there had been an increase to the societies of one thousand eight hundred and seventy-three, the whole number being four thousand nine hundred and twenty-one, and nine preachers were admitted on trial. Four new circuits were formed, namely, Fairfax, Hanover, Pittsylvania, and Carolina, the former being in the state of Virginia, and the latter in North Carolina, places which had been blessed with the revival of religion already noticed. There were eleven circuits returned on the minutes, and twenty-five preachers stationed on them.

CHAPTER 2

From the commencement of the Revolution in 1776, to its termination in 1783.

This year forms a memorable era in the history of these United States. The sanguinary conflict which had commenced in 1775 now broke forth with increased violence, and all hope of reconciliation was prostrated, only on condition of an acknowledgment on the part of Great Britain of the independence of the United States.

The fleets of England were in our harbors, and her soldiers were landed upon our shores. But what rendered a reconciliation hopeless was, that on the 4th of July, 1776, congress had declared the thirteen united colonies, which they represented, free and independent states. This state of things rendered the situation of many of the Methodist preachers peculiarly trying, and more especially those of them who were known to be favorable to the British cause. As some of them, not taking the very seasonable advice given by Mr. Wesley in the letter above inserted, spoke their sentiments freely against the proceedings of congress and of the American states, they were subjected to some persecutions. And although only four out of the twenty-five preachers were from England, yet as these four were leading men, the others were suspected of favoring the cause of Britain, and were therefore exposed to similar suspicions and treatment. Mr. Asbury, though among the most prudent of them all in his speech and conduct, says that on the 20th of June he was, "fined, near Baltimore, five pounds for preaching the gospel." But though it was with no little difficulty that they were able to travel some of the circuits, and obliged entirely to abandon others, yet conscious of their Christian integrity, the preachers persevered in their labors wherever they could find access to the people; and in many places their efforts were crowned with great success in the awakening and conversion of sinners; as is manifest from the increase of preachers and people before mentioned.

Among those preachers, raised up in this country, we find on the minutes for this year the name of Freeborn Garrettson, whose labors afterward contributed so much to the advancement of the cause of Jesus Christ in these United States.¹

1777. The fifth conference was held this year in the Deer Creek meeting house, Harford county, in the state of Maryland. The war at this time raged with great violence, so that by the marching and countermarching of armies, enlisting of soldiers, frequent skirmishes between the contending parties, some of the places, even where religion had prevailed to a considerable extent, were not visited at all by the preachers. Last year Norfolk in Virginia was abandoned, and this year no preacher was stationed in New York; nor do we find this

1 As it is my intention to give a condensed account of such preachers as were any way eminent for their labors, sufferings, and success, when their death is noticed, no more will be said of them in the thread of the history than is necessary to a connected account of the work which was carried on by their instrumentality.

city among the stations again until 1783, though there was a small society of members still there. The cause of this abandonment of the city for so long a time was, that the British troops had it in possession, and had converted the meeting house into barracks for the soldiers, so that it was not possible to occupy it for preaching regularly, even had a preacher been permitted to reside among them. Such are the fatal results of war, that scourge of humanity.²

But although these were the disastrous results of the war in some places, more particularly in the middle states, yet in others there were gracious outpourings of the Spirit, and revivals of the work of God, the southern states not being yet so much exposed to the ravages of this cruel warfare. In the Brunswick circuit, particularly, as well as the two circuits, Sussex and Amelia, which had been recently taken from it, and in some parts of North Carolina, the work of God continued to spread to a considerable extent. Though, therefore, there was a decrease of members on those circuits which were exposed to the depredations of contending armies, yet, when they came to the conference, they found an increase on the whole of 2047 members and 12 preachers, making the entire number in society to be 6968, and 36 preachers — so mercifully did God own their labors for the salvation of souls. It was at this conference that those preachers who came from England took into consideration the propriety of returning home; but they finally concluded to remain a while longer, as the way seemed not yet plain for them to leave their American brethren. It seems, indeed, that as early as the month of January preceding, Messrs. Rankin and Shadford had seriously meditated on returning to England; for Mr. Asbury says, under date of January 22, that he met them at their request, and “found them inclined to leave America and embark for England. “But,” he adds, “I had before resolved not to depart from the work on any consideration.” About the middle of September, however, Messrs. Rankin and Rodda embarked for their native country.

Notwithstanding the prudent caution given to the preachers by Mr. Wesley, in which he advised them not to meddle with the political affairs of the country, they did not all abide by it, but some were very busy in exciting a spirit of disaffection toward the American cause. That they should have felt strongly inclined to favor the cause of their king and country is but natural, and might very well be pardoned on the score of national partiality; but that any professed minister of Jesus Christ should have descended from his high and holy calling to mingle with the combatants of that day in their warlike measures, is a fault for which

2 It is said, however, in a memoir of the Rev. Mr. Mann, a preacher who afterward went to Nova Scotia, that for a considerable time during the war, at the request of the trustees and leaders, he held meetings in the chapel in New York, until he was relieved by the coming of Mr. Spragg, a regular traveling preacher, who came from Philadelphia, after the British took possession of that city. Through the labors of those men of God a small society was kept together, notwithstanding the difficulties with which they had to contend in those troublesome time.

Christianity furnishes no apology. This, however, was the unhappy case with Mr. Rodda previously to his departure for England. While on his circuit he was detected in spreading the king's proclamation, and otherwise endeavoring to stir up a spirit of opposition to the American government. Fearing, however, the resentment of his enemies, by the assistance of some slaves he made his escape to the British fleet; and as Philadelphia was then in possession of the British army, he was sent thither, and from thence to his native land. His departure, therefore, was no cause of regret to the Methodists in this country.

Another circumstance tended not a little to excite a spirit of persecution toward the Methodists. A backslider, by the name of Chauncey Clowe, succeeded in enlisting about three hundred men for the British standard, and before he was detected, was the means of shedding blood. He was, however, arrested, and finally hung as a rebel against the government. In the course of the examination, it was found that only two Methodists were engaged in this plot; and the remarks of Governor Rodney, who was friendly to our cause, to those of our enemies who had assiduously endeavored to fix upon them the foul mark of toryism, put them to silence, and obtained for our friends temporary relief.

What made this war the more distressing was the fact, that in many parts of the country the people were divided among themselves in regard to the lawfulness or expediency of taking up arms against Great Britain. This led to domestic disputes, and not infrequently the father was against the son, and the daughter against the mother, and one neighbor against another. These things produced an irritation of spirit exceedingly unfriendly to the progress of pure religion. But that which exposed the Methodist preachers still more to the suspicions of their enemies, was the fact, that Mr. Wesley had published a pamphlet addressed to the Americans, in which he condemned their conduct, and justified the measures of the British cabinet. This well-meant endeavor of Mr. Wesley, though it may have had a good effect upon the societies under his care in Great Britain, had quite a deleterious influence upon the Methodists in this country. As some copies of this pamphlet found their way here, they tended to increase the irritation against the Methodist preachers, and to expose them to fresh insults. Though Mr. Wesley may be commended as a loyalist for his well-meant endeavors to convince the Americans that they were wrong in taking up arms against his king and country, yet we cannot but believe that he committed an error in thus interfering in the political affairs of this country, as it manifestly tended to increase the difficulties with which the preachers had to contend, without at all mitigating the evils resulting from the war which was then raging. Amid all these difficulties, however, Mr. Asbury stood his ground knowing that his "record was on high, and at his reward was with his God."

Speaking of the of Mssrs. Rankin and Rodda, he says, "So we are left alone. But I leave myself in the hand of God, relying on his good providence to direct and protect us, persuaded that nothing will befall me but what shall conduce to his glory and my benefit."

1778. On the 19th of May of this year the sixth conference was in Leesburgh, Va., at which time six new circuits were added, namely, Berkey, Fluvanna, James City, and Lunenburgh, in Virginia, and Carolina circuit in North Carolina was divided into three, called Roanoke; Tar River, and New Hope; and five of the old circuits, on account of the war, were left from the minutes; these were New York, Philadelphia, Chester, Frederick, and Norfolk. Though there was an increase in the number of circuits, yet there was a decrease of 873 members, the whole number being 6095; and also of the preachers 29, being 5 less than last year.

In order to insure obedience to the government, and to distinguish between friends and enemies, all were called upon to take an oath of allegiance to the state authorities in which they resided, and of course to abjure allegiance to the crown of Great Britain. To the taking this oath many of the preachers had conscientious scruples, which exposed them to many vexations, and obliged some of them to leave their stations. Mr. George Shadford, whose labors had been so abundantly blessed to the awakening and conversion of souls, after keeping a day of fasting and prayer in company with Mr. Asbury for divine direction, took his departure this year for England, leaving behind him the savor of a good name, and many happy souls as seals to his ministry.

As Mr. Asbury could not persuade himself to take the required oath of allegiance to the state of Maryland, where he was in the first part of this year, he retired to the state of Delaware, where he found an asylum in the house of Judge White for nearly twelve months. While the storm of war was raging around him, and while all his English brethren had forsaken him and the flocks intrusted to their care, he determined to wait patiently until the tempest should subside, that he might again launch forth upon a calmer sea in quest of immortal souls. But though he was thus secluded from the pursuit of his enemies in the house of his friend and patron, Thomas White, Esq., he says, that except for about two months, when the necessity of the case compelled him, contrary to his most ardent wishes, to be silent, it was a "season of the most active, most useful, and suffering part of his life." Though he could not appear before the congregations on the Sabbath, he was wont to leave his retreat in the gloom of the night, and go from house to house to enforce the truths of the gospel; and notwithstanding the difficulties with which he and others had to contend in those times of trouble, they were gradually laying a foundation deep and broad, by their labors and sufferings, for that success which Methodism has since had in these United States.

But Mr. Asbury was not the only sufferer on this occasion. Mr. Freeborn Garrettson was at that time actively and successfully engaged in preaching the gospel in Queen Anne's county, in the state of Maryland. After having paid a visit to Mr. Asbury in his seclusion at Judge Whites, where he had an opportunity of preaching to a small company, he returned to Queen Anne's and preached. The next day, as he was on his way to Kent, he was met by one John Brown, formerly a judge of that county, who seized his horse's bridle; and notwithstanding the remonstrances of Mr. Garrettson, who assured him that he was on the Lord's errand,

peaceably engaged in persuading sinners to be reconciled to God, Brown alighted from horse, seized a stick, and began beating Mr. Garrettson over the head and shoulders, in the meantime calling for help. As some were approaching, as he thought with a rope, Brown let go the bridle, when Mr. Garrettson gave his horse the whip, and thus cleared himself from the grasp of his persecutors. He was, however, soon overtaken by his pursuer, who struck at him with all his might, when Mr. Garrettson was thrown from his horse with great violence. Providentially a lady passed along with a lancet and he was taken to a house and bled, by which means he was restored to his senses, of which he had been deprived by the blows he had received, and the fall from his horse. He then began to exhort his persecutor, who fearing that death would ensue, exhibited some sorrow and great trepidation of heart, offering to take Mr. Garrettson in his carriage wherever he wanted to go. No sooner, however, did he perceive that the patient sufferer was likely to recover, than he brought a magistrate, more wicked than himself, both of whom, says Mr. Garrettson, “appeared as if actuated by the devil.” The following is his own account of the termination of this affair: —

“With a stern look the magistrate demanded my name. I told him; and he took out his pen and ink, and began to write a mittimus to commit me to jail. ‘Pray, sir,’ said I, ‘are you a justice of the peace?’ He replied that he was. ‘Why, then,’ said I, ‘do you suffer men to behave in his manner? If such persons are not taken notice of, a stranger can with no degree of safety travel the road.’ ‘You have,’ said he, ‘broken the law.’ ‘How do you know that,’ answered I; ‘but suppose I have, is this the way to put the law in force against me? I am an inhabitant of this state, and have property in it; and, if I mistake not, the law says for the first offense, the fine is five pounds; and double for every offense after. The grand crime was preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which I greatly rejoice. My enemy,’ said I, ‘conducted himself more like a highwayman than a person enforcing the law in a Christian country. Be well assured, this matter will be brought light,’ said I, ‘in awful eternity.’ He dropped his pen, and made no farther attempt to send me to prison. By this time, the woman who bled me came, with a carriage, and I found myself able to rise from my bed and give an exhortation to the magistrate, my persecutor, and others who were present.”

From this time Mr. Garrettson went on his way rejoicing in all the mighty things which the Lord did by his instrumentality; for he wrought wonderfully by his means in the states of Maryland and Delaware, through both of which he traveled extensively, and many flocked to hear the word.

Mr. Joseph Hartley also, another traveling preacher, a man of great zeal and faithfulness, was apprehended in Queen Anne’s county for preaching the gospel, who gave bonds and security to appear for trial at the next court. Being forbidden to preach, he attended his appointments; and after singing and prayer, stood upon his knees and exhorted the people, until his enemies said that he might as well preach, standing on his feet as on his knees. He went thence to Talbot county, where he was seized and committed to jail for “preaching

Jesus and him crucified.” This, however, by no means silenced him. The people collecting around the walls of his prison, he preached to them through the grates; and so powerfully was the word applied to their hearts, that some of them were deeply awakened to a sense of their lost and guilty state, and began earnestly to seek the Lord. This induced some of the inhabitants to remark that unless Hartley were released from prison he would convert the whole town. After keeping him confined for some time, he was set at liberty; but such had been the blessed effects of his preaching, that a powerful revival followed, which terminated in the establishment of a flourishing society in that place.

In the latter part of this year, Mr. Asbury ventured from his seclusion and preached the gospel of the kingdom in various parts of Delaware state with such freedom and success, that he remarks, the “gospel meets with such indulgence in this free state,” that it “will become as the garden of the Lord, filled with plants of his own planting.” The truth of this anticipation has been fully verified.

1779. — Previously to the assembling of the conference, mentioned in the minutes for this year, the preachers in the more northerly states assembled at Judge White’s, where Mr. Asbury had retired from the fury of his enemies, and there held a conference, with Mr. Asbury at their head, who now acted since the departure of Mr. Rankin and the other English preachers, by a vote of this conference, as the general assistant. Although this was considered as “a preparatory conference,” yet if we take into consideration that the one afterward held at the Broken Back Church, in Virginia, was held in the absence of the general assistant, we shall see good reason for allowing that this, which was held under the presidency of Mr. Asbury, was the regular conference, and hence their acts and doings are to be considered valid.

This year was distinguished by considerable troubles in the societies. These arose principally from a desire manifested among the people in the south to have the ordinances administered to them. That we may understand this subject, it is necessary to remark, that the Methodist preachers, both in Europe and America, were considered only as lay-preachers, having never been separated to the work of the ministry by imposition of hands. Mr. Wesley’s strong attachment to the established Church of England had induced him to oppose every thing which tended to a separation from her communion, or to a violation of any of her canons or ordinances. Hence, although frequently importuned to set apart some of his preachers by imposition of hands to the entire work of the ministry, he steadily resisted all such solicitations, exhorting his people to go to the Church for the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper. Mr. Asbury, and those English preachers who had been associated with him in this country, had been educated in the Wesleyan school, and hence had sternly resisted all attempts to depart, in this respect, from the principles and practice of their founder.

As we have already seen, at an early period of Methodism in America, some of the preachers, and, probably through their influence, the people too, had manifested a strong desire to deviate from this course of conduct, and to have the ordinances among themselves. Mr. Asbury and his associates had resisted all such attempts at innovation, endeavoring to persuade the people to be content to receive the ordinances as they had done, from the hands of their parochial clergy. The question was agitated at the Deer Creek Conference, in 1777, where Mr. Rankin presided. Here the question was asked, "Shall the preachers in America administer the ordinances?" And after a full discussion, it was answered, "We will suspend them until the next conference." At the next conference, which was held in Leesburgh, Va., May 19, 1778, 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. Here the question, "Shall we administer the ordinances?" was again discussed, and it was finally decided to "lay it over until the next conference."

This "next conference" was the one we are now considering. Here the arguments in favor of administering the ordinances came up with double force. The war had separated them from Mr. Wesley; all the English preachers, except Mr. Asbury, had returned to England, and nearly all the ministers of the establishment, being unfriendly to the American cause, had also left their flocks and gone home; and most of those who remained were irregular in their lives and not evangelical in their preaching. In these circumstances, the children were left unbaptized and the people were destitute of the Lord's supper. They furthermore said, that as God had made them instrumental in the conversion of the souls of the people, so he had given them authority to administer his ordinances; and the people were exceedingly desirous "to have it so."

It was under these views and feelings that the brethren assembled in Fluvanna county, Va. on the 18th of May, 1779. Knowing something of the disposition which prevailed there on this subject, Mr. Watters was sent from the conference which had been held at Judge White's, to endeavor to dissuade them from carrying their design into execution. His efforts, however, were unavailing; for after deliberating upon the subject, they appointed a committee of some of the oldest brethren to ordain ministers. The members of this committee first ordained each other, and then proceeded to ordain others by imposition of hands. Those who were thus ordained, went out preaching and administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper to all who desired them, either for themselves or for their children; and thus was a breach made between the northern and southern preachers. These men, however, being pious and zealous, and withal much favored by the people for complying with their wishes, were very successful in their labors; but the preachers at the north mourned over them on account of their departure from what they very justly considered Wesleyan Methodism.

In consequence of this temporary division, there were two separate minutes taken in 1779, each conference passing its own resolutions, and stationing its preachers; but the numbers in society and of preachers are set down in the minutes of the Fluvanna conference. From these it appears, that, notwithstanding the ravages of the war, the opposition and persecution with which some of the preachers had to contend, and the dissensions among themselves respecting the ordinances, they had an increase of 2482 members and of 20 preachers; so greatly did the word God multiply and prevail in those troublesome times.

At these conferences they passed resolutions that “every exhorter and local preacher should go under the direction of the assistants where, and only where, they shall appoint — that they should “meet the children once a fortnight, and examine the parents in regard to their conduct toward them” — and after having elected Mr. Asbury as the general assistant, they inserted this question and answer:

“Question How far shall his power extend?

Answer On hearing every preacher for and against what is in debate, the right of determination shall rest with him according to the minutes.” These resolutions were adopted at the conference held at Judge White’s, in the state of Delaware. It seems, therefore, that they were not in the habit at that time of determining debatable questions by a majority of votes; but, in imitation of the practice of Mr. Wesley, after hearing all that could be said pro and con, the presiding officer decided the point.

The conference at Fluvanna determined to lengthen the time of trial of a preacher from one to two years, which has continued a standing rule to this day. They also declared that any preacher who received “money by subscription” was “excluded the Methodist connection.” As these were the only rules which passed that body, except resolving to ordain ministers and to administer the ordinances, it is probable that they acquiesced in what was done by the other conference, which was held under the presidency of Mr. Asbury.

1780. — The eighth conference assembled in Baltimore, April 24th of this year. That our readers may see the spirit by which they were actuated, the following questions and answers are inserted as I find them in the printed minutes: —

Question 7. Ought not all the assistants to see to the settling of all the preaching houses by trustees, and order the said trustees to meet once in half a year, and keep a register of their proceedings; if there are any vacancies choose new trustees, for the better security of the houses, and let all the deeds be drawn in substance after that in the printed minutes?

Answer Yes.

Question 8. Shall all the traveling preachers take a license from every conference, importing that they are assistants or helpers in connection with us?

Answer Yes.

Question 9. Shall brother Asbury sign them in behalf of the conference?

Answer Yes.

Question 10. Ought it to be strictly enjoined on all our local preachers and exhorters, that no one presume to speak in public without taking a note every quarter, (if required,) and be examined by the assistant with respect to his life, his qualification, and reception.

Answer Yes.

Question 11. Ought not all our preachers to make conscience of rising at four, and if not, yet at five: (is it not a shame for a preacher to be in bed till six in the morning?)

Answer Undoubtedly they ought.

Question 12. Shall we continue in close connection with the Church, and press our people to a closer connection with her?

Answer Yes.

Question 13. Will this conference grant the privilege to all the friendly clergy of the Church of England, at the request or desire of the people, to preach or administer the ordinances in our preaching houses or chapels?

Answer Yes.

Question 14. What provision shall we make for the wives of married preachers?

Answer They shall receive an equivalent with their husbands in quarterage, if they stand in need.

Question 15. Ought not our preachers, if possible, to speak to every person one by one in the families where they lodge, before prayer, if time will permit; or give a family exhortation after reading a chapter?

Answer They ought.

Question 16. Ought not this conference to require those traveling preachers who hold slaves, to give promises to set them free?"

Answer Yes.

Question 17. Does conference acknowledge that slavery is contrary to the law of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society; contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would not others should do to us and ours? — Do we pass our disapprobation on all our friends who keep slaves, and advise their freedom?

Answer Yes.

Question 18. Shall we recommend our quarterly meetings to be held on Saturdays and Sundays when convenient?

Answer Agreed.

Question 19. Shall not the Friday following every quarter day be appointed as a day of fasting?

Answer Yes.

Question 20. Does this whole conference disapprove the step our brethren have taken in Virginia? [giving American Methodist ministers authority to perform the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper — DVM]

Answer Yes.

Question 21. Do we look upon them no longer as Methodists in connection with Mr. Wesley and us till they come back?³

Answer Agreed.

Question 22. Shall brother Asbury, Garrettson, and Watters attend the Virginia conference, and inform them of our proceedings in this, and receive their answer?

Answer Yes.

Question 23. Do we disapprove of the practice of distilling grain into liquor? Shall we disown our friends who will not renounce the practice?

Answer Yes.

Question 24. What shall the conference do in case of brother Asbury's death or absence?

Answer Meet once a year, and act according to the minutes.

Question 25. Ought not the assistant to meet the colored people himself, and appoint as helpers in his absence proper white persons, and not suffer them to stay late and meet by themselves?

Answer Yes.

Question 26. What must be the conditions of our union with our Virginian brethren?

Answer To suspend all their administrations for one year, and all meet together in Baltimore.

On the minute respecting slavery, Mr. Lee, in his History of the Methodists, remarks, that "it was going too far, and calculated to irritate the minds of our people, and not to convince them of their errors." Of this the conferences were subsequently convinced, as they found it necessary to relax in their measures against slave-holders, without, however, attempting to justify the system of slavery itself.

By these, minutes, it will also be seen that the preachers of that day set their faces against "distilling grain into liquor," determining to "disown those who would not renounce the practice."

From this it may be seen that the Methodist conference set itself against the use of alcoholic liquors long before the temperance movements, which have so distinguished the present days, and which have conferred such lasting blessings upon the community. What a pity there should ever have been any relaxation either in the phraseology or enforcement of this rule! But that which affected them the most vitally was, the resolution respecting their Virginia brethren, who, it should be noted, did not convene with the Baltimore conference, but held one of their own in Virginia; but as their proceedings are not upon record, we cannot say what they did. As, however, this conference forms a very important item in the history of Methodism, in which Mr. Asbury took such a deep interest and agency, I will give his

3 This refers to a partial separation which took place in Virginia on account of the ordinances.

own account of the whole affair, as I find it recorded in his Journal under date of May 8th, 9th, 10th 1780.

“We rode to Granger’s, fifteen miles, stopped and fed our horses. These people are full of the ordinances; we talked and prayed with them, then rode on to the Manakin-town ferry, much fatigued with the ride; went to friend Smith’s, where all the preachers were met. I conducted myself with cheerful freedom, but found there was a separation in heart and practice. I spoke with my countryman, John Dickins, and found him opposed to our continuance in union with the Episcopal Church. Brother Watters and Garrettson tried their men, and found them inflexible.

“Tuesday 9. — The conference was called: brother Watters, Garrettson, and myself stood back, and being afterward joined by brother Dromgoole, we were desired to come in, and I was permitted to speak. I read Mr. Wesley’s thoughts against a separation — showed my private letters of instructions from Mr. Wesley — set before them the sentiments of the Delaware and Baltimore conferences — read our epistles, and read my letter to brother Gatch, and Dickins’s letter in answer. After some time spent this way, it was proposed to me, if I would get the circuits supplied, they would desist; but that I could not do. We went to preaching; I spoke on Ruth ii, 4, and spoke as though nothing had been the matter among the preachers or people; and we were greatly pleased and comforted — there was some moving among the people. In the afternoon we met; the preachers appeared to me to be farther off; there had been, I thought, some talking out of door. When we, Asbury, Garrettson, Watters and Dromgoole, could not come to a conclusion with them we withdrew, and left them to deliberate on the condition I offered, which was to suspend the measures they had taken for one year. After an hour’s conference, we were called to receive their answer, which was, they could not submit to the terms of union. I then prepared to leave the house, to go to a near neighbor’s to lodge, under the heaviest cloud I ever felt in America — O! what I felt! — nor I alone, but the agents on both sides! — they wept like children, but kept their opinions.

“Wednesday 10. — I returned to take leave of conference, and to go off immediately to the north; but found they were brought to an agreement while I had been praying, as with a broken heart, in the house we went to lodge at; and brothers Watters and Garrettson had been praying up stairs where the conference sat. We heard what they had to say — surely the hand of God has been greatly seen in all this: there might have been twenty promising preachers, and three thousand people, seriously affected by this separation; but the Lord would not suffer this — we then had preaching by brother Watters on, ‘Come thou with us, and we will do thee good:’ afterward we had a love-feast; preachers and people wept, prayed, and talked, so that the spirit of dissension was powerfully weakened, and I hoped it would never take again.”

This unhappy affair being thus amicably adjusted, the preachers went to their respective fields of labor with renewed courage; and although the clouds of war still hung lowering over all the land, and often threatened them with showers of persecution, yet those who became personally acquainted with them were so thoroughly convinced of the purity of their motives and conduct, and some of those being among the most influential men in the country, they threw around them the shield of their protection. Mr. Asbury being let loose from his confinement, traveled extensively through the southern counties of Virginia and some parts of North Carolina, exerting all his powers to promote the cause of God, and particularly to heal the divisions which had arisen from the disputes respecting the ordinances. Though the preachers all agreed to suspend their use for the present, yet a few of them being not a little pleased with their self-created authority, submitted to the measure with great reluctance, and many of the people surrendered their supposed privileges not without a struggle. Through his influence, however, and that of Mr. Garrettson, and some other influential men of peace and union, the breach was finally healed, and peace and love reigned throughout their borders.

Some places, however, were much disturbed and distressed on account of the war, which now raged with increased violence. In consequence of the continual marching and counter-marching of the armies, both of friends and enemies, some of the circuits were abandoned, and others but partially supplied. And although general protection was extended to the preachers, in conformity to the principles of civil and religious liberty for which the United States were now contending, yet there were not wanting individuals who, from various pretexts, stirred up a spirit of persecution against the Methodists. To those who were deeply interested in the success of our arms and who were actuated only by the blind impulses of human nature in its depraved state, it was provoking to find a people in the midst of them led on by a number of active and zealous preachers, who were from principle averse to war; for such was the case in respect to most of the preachers and people denominated Methodists. Add to this the fact, that their first leaders were directly from England, some of whom had not concealed their partiality for their mother country, and all under a leader who had boldly advocated the cause of his government, and denounced the Americans as rebels, it is no wonder that any one who wished to raise the wind of persecution against a Methodist preacher, need only shout Tory, and his wish was accomplished. To this disgraceful practice some resorted, and thereby gratified their unreasonable opposition to the men whom they inwardly hated on account of the spirited manner in which they rebuked them for their wickedness. Among others who suffered in this way, the most conspicuous was Mr. F. Garrettson. On the 27th of February of this year, after preaching to a numerous and attentive congregation in Dorchester county, he was seized by his enemies, and finally committed to prison. Though he suffered much in body in consequence of having no other bed than the floor, with his saddle bags for his pillow, with two large windows open upon him yet he

enjoyed great spiritual consolation in prayer and meditation, reading and writing, and was not a little comforted by the visits and prayers of his friends and pious acquaintances.

Before, however, his trial came on, Mr. Asbury went to the governor of Maryland and interceded behalf of Mr. Garrettson; and the governor of Delaware state, being a great friend to the Methodists, sent a letter of recommendation to the governor of Maryland, who immediately set him at liberty. Though the enemies of the cross of Christ in Dorchester county were much dissatisfied with his liberation, yet the authority of their governor prevailed over their opposition, and Mr. Garrettson immediately recommenced his favorite work of preaching the gospel, and “the word of the Lord,” says he, “spread through all that country, and hundreds, both white and black, experienced the love of Jesus,” so that not far from the very place where he was imprisoned, he soon after preached to a congregation of not less than three thousand people, and many of his bitterest persecutors were among the happy converts to the truth.

From the minutes of the conference it appears there was a decrease of members of seventy-three, and of preachers seven; the number being, preachers forty-two, members eight thousand five hundred and four.

1781. It seems that the conference this year was begun at Choptank, in the state of Delaware, April 16, and adjourned to Baltimore, to the 24th of the same month. The following are assigned as the reasons for this measure: — “To examine those who could not go to Baltimore, and to provide supplies for the circuits where the Lord is more immediately pouring out his Spirit.” With a view to secure greater unanimity of sentiment and action, thirty-nine out of fifty-four preachers set their names to a paper, expressive of their determination to “preach the old Methodist doctrine, and strictly to enforce the discipline as contained in the notes, sermons, and minutes published by Mr. Wesley,” and “to discountenance a separation among either preachers or people.”

They also passed a rule respecting local preachers, forbidding their traveling circuits without consulting Mr. Asbury, or the assistant near where he resides; also providing that no excluded person should be readmitted without giving evidence of repentance; and a third making it the duty of preachers to read often the Rules of the Societies, the Character of a Methodist, and the Plain Account of Christian Perfection.

This year the following rule was adopted for settling disputes which might arise between brethren in their dealings with each other: “Let the assistant preacher at quarterly meeting consult with the steward, in appointing proper persons to examine into the circumstances, and if there be any suspicion of injustice, or inability in the referees, to appoint men of more skill and probity, and the parties to abide by their decision, or be excluded the society.” They likewise appointed the first Thursday in June, September, January, and April, as days of general fasting.

For the first time, the following question and answer were recorded: —

“Question Who desist from traveling this year?

“Answer John Dickins, Isham Tatum, William Moore, Greenberry Green, Daniel Ruff.”

Notwithstanding the ravages of the war, which raged this year with most violence in the southern states, the Lord greatly blessed the labors of his faithful and devoted servants, particularly in the states of Maryland and Delaware, as well as in some parts of Virginia and North Carolina; but some of the circuits in these latter places were so harassed with hostile armies, that they were not accessible to the preachers; and many of the members, though much averse to war, were obliged to serve in the American army, by which means some lost their lives, others made “shipwreck of faith and a good conscience,” and all were less or more injured in their religious character and enjoyments. Those who were so entirely opposed to war from principle as utterly to refuse to fight, were whipped, or fined and imprisoned, and persecuted in a variety of ways. And such were the anxieties manifested by the people respecting the final issue of the contest, particularly in Virginia, where the bloody conflict was renewed this year with increased violence, that when they did assemble for divine worship, their conversation turned more upon the political situation of the country, and the probable results of the war, than upon religion; fathers and mothers were anxious for the fate of their sons who were in the army, and wives for their husbands.

But though these things exerted an injurious influence upon individuals, and in some places upon whole societies, yet, as a body, they prospered, so much so that the increase was not less than two thousand and thirty-five, and of preachers twelve.

Among others who contributed to advance the cause of God was the Rev. Mr. Jarratt, before mentioned. He attended the conference, preached to the people with great power and acceptance, gave his advice in matters of importance, and administered the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper. Of his services Mr. Asbury makes honorable mention in his Journal for this year. After speaking of preaching in his barn he says, Mr. Jarratt seemed all life, and I determined to spend himself in the work of God, and visit what circuits he could.” This year has been rendered famous in the annals of our country by the capture of the British army under the command of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia. This event gave a pleasing hope to the friends of peace on both sides of the Atlantic — and to none more than to the Methodists — that this war, which had so long desolated the continent, would soon come to an end; while American patriots hailed this as an auspicious event, bringing with it a sure pledge of future prosperity.

1782. The tenth conference commenced in Ellis’s preaching house, Va., April 17, and by adjournment in Baltimore, May 21. This was done to accommodate the preachers; but as that held in Baltimore was the oldest, nothing that was done in the Virginia conference was considered binding, unless sanctioned by this conference.

Preachers this year, 59; (Preachers last year, 54); Members, 11,785; (Members last year, 10,539); Increase in Preachers, 5; Increase in Members, 1,246.

The appointment of Mr. Asbury by Mr. Wesley as general assistant was reconfirmed at this conference by a unanimous vote, After passing sundry rules for the better regulation of themselves and the people of their charge, the following was entered upon the minutes: — “The conference acknowledge their obligations to the Rev. Mr. Jarratt, for his kind and friendly services to the preachers and people, from our first entrance into Virginia, and more particularly for attending our conference in Sussex, in public and private; and advise the preachers in the south to consult him and take his advice in the absence of brother Asbury.”

At this conference they re-resolved to abide by the decision formerly made, not to administer the ordinances. To supply this deficiency, Mr. Jarratt proffered his services, attended some of their quarterly meetings, administered the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper, and otherwise assisted them in their work of spreading the gospel among the people. Hence the above acknowledgment of his services.

Only two circuits, Lancaster, in Pennsylvania, and South Branch, in Virginia, had been added during the past year. Nor do we find any thing special in reference to the general state of the societies; but there was a considerable outpouring of the Spirit in the northern parts of Virginia and in some parts of Maryland. For the first time they determined when and where the next conference should be held, namely, in Virginia the first Thursday, and in Baltimore the last Wednesday in May. Considering the state of the country, the societies in general were prosperous, and much united together.

1783. On the 6th of May the eleventh conference assembled at Ellis’ preaching house in Virginia, and by adjournment in Baltimore on the 27th of the same month.

Preachers this year, 82; (Preachers last year, 59); Members, 13,740; (Members last year, 11,789); Increase in Preachers, 23; Increase in Members, 1,955.

We find them at this conference ordering the sum two hundred and sixty pounds to be raised for the support of the preachers’ wives. The following rules were passed on the subject of slavery, and on the manufacturing and drinking spirituous liquors: —

“**Question** What shall be done with our local preachers who hold slaves contrary to the laws which authorize their freedom in any of the United States.

“**Answer** We will try them another year. In the meantime, let every assistant deal faithfully and plainly with every one, and report to the next conference. It may be necessary to suspend them.

“**Question** Should our friends be permitted to make spirituous liquors, sell, and drink them in drams.

“**Answer** By no means. We think it wrong in its natural consequences and desire all our preachers to teach our people, by precept and example, to put away this evil.”

The first Thursdays in July and October were appointed as days of thanksgiving “for our public peace, temporal and spiritual prosperity, and for the glorious work of God:” and the first Fridays in January and April were set apart as days of fasting and prayer.

After appointing the next conference to be held in the city of Baltimore on the fourth Thursday in May, 1784, they ordered that “the assistants and those who were to be received into full connection,” should attend. This is the first time that we find on record any rule respecting who should attend the conference.

Richard Garrettson, Micajah Debruler, and Samuel Watson, desisted from traveling.

They could not but be thankful to the great Head of the Church for sending peace in their borders, by which means the restraints which had been imposed, in many places, upon the preachers were taken off, and they were therefore permitted to travel wherever they pleased, and to preach the gospel to whomsoever they might find willing to hear it. The consequence was that their borders were greatly enlarged on every hand, both in the older and new settlements.

On hearing this glorious news, Mr. Asbury, who, perhaps, had suffered as much as any of the preachers for conscience’ sake, makes the following reflections:

“April 5, I heard the news that peace was confirmed between England and America. I had various exercises of mind on the occasion: it may cause great changes to take place among us; some for the better and some for the worse. It may make against the work of God. Our preachers will be far more likely to settle in the world; and our people, by getting into trade and acquiring wealth, may drink into its spirit. Believing the report to be true, I took some notice of it while I treated on Acts x, 36, at brother Clayton’s, near Halifax, where they were firing their cannon and rejoicing in their way on the occasion.”

These certainly are very chastened exultations in a man who had suffered so much from the calamities of war, and must, therefore, have enjoyed some bright anticipations from the return of peace; but they show with what moderation he received every temporal mercy, lest it might, by its abuse, become an occasion of a sinful conformity to the spirit and temper of this world.

The Methodist societies, however, soon began to witness the beneficial results from this termination of hostilities, in the enlargement of their work, and in the facilities afforded to the preachers to itinerate through the country. During the war many had moved from the more immediate scene of the conflict to the back settlements, where they were destitute of the word and ordinances of religion. On the return, of peace, these were visited by the preachers, while the older circuits, some of which had been either entirely, or partially abandoned during the war, were now regularly supplied; and the consequence of these salutary movements was, a more diffusive spread of the gospel, and the bringing the societies into greater compactness and order under their disciplinary regulations. Hence pure religion greatly revived in almost every direction, while several additional laborers entered the field

of itinerancy. That success attended their labors is manifest from the fact that the increase to the numbers in society was, as before stated, one thousand nine hundred and fifty-five, and that eleven new circuits were taken into the work. These were Caroline and Anamessex, in Maryland; Allegheny, Cumberland, and Holstein, in Virginia; Guilford, Caswell, Salisbury, Marsh, Bertie, and Pasquotank, in North Carolina; Norfolk and New York, which had been left destitute in consequence of having been in possession of the British troops, were again supplied with preachers.

The intercourse between England and the United States being restored on the return of peace, it was feared that men of exceptionable character might be induced to emigrate from that to this country, and endeavor to palm themselves upon the people as Methodists or preachers. To prevent impositions of this sort, the present conference passed the following rule: —

“We will not receive them,” (European Methodists) “without a letter of recommendation, the truth of which we have no reason to doubt.”

They were much strengthened in this resolution by receiving, in the latter part of this year, the following letter from Mr. Wesley: —

Bristol, Oct., 1783

- 1 Let all of you be determined to abide by the Methodist doctrine and discipline, published in the four volumes of Sermons, and the Notes upon the New Testament, together with the large minutes of conference.
- 2 Beware of preachers coming from Great Britain or Ireland without a full recommendation from me. Three of our traveling preachers here eagerly desired to go to America; but I could not approve of it by any means; because I am not satisfied that they thoroughly like either our discipline or our doctrine; I think they differ from our judgment in one or both. Therefore if these or any others come without my recommendation, take care how you receive them.
- 3 Neither should you receive any preachers, however recommended, who will not be subject to the American conference, and cheerfully conform to the minutes both of the American and English conferences.
- 4 I do not wish our American brethren to receive any who make any difficulty on receiving Francis Asbury as the general assistant.

“Undoubtedly, the greatest danger to the work of God in America is likely to arise either from preachers coming from Europe, or from such as will arise from among yourselves, speaking perverse things, or bringing in among you new doctrines, particularly Calvinian.

You should guard against this with all possible care, for it is far easier to keep them out than to thrust them out.

“I commend you all to the grace of God, and am your affectionate friend and brother,
“John Wesley.”

It was not to be expected that all who made profession of religion should adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, nor that all who professed to be called of God to preach the gospel should stand fast in their calling, giving no occasion of offense. Mr. Asbury, in his Journal for this year, gives an affecting account of the apostasy and sudden death of Isaac Rawlings, who had been employed for eight or ten years as a preacher, but who furnished evidence of his instability at various times. He finally, after striving in a secret way, to make a party for himself, left the connection, and he and his adherents took possession of the Forest chapel. He was, however, soon forsaken by his followers, and became irregular in his life, lost the confidence of the public, and after having spent some hours in writing a defense of himself against some scandalous imputations which had been cast upon his character, mounted a “mettlesome horse, and had not rode many yards before he was thrown to the ground and died on the spot.” “I had said,” says Mr. Asbury, “I think he cannot stay long, because he did pervert the right ways of the Lord.”

1784. — On the 30th of April, the twelfth conference began at Ellis’s chapel, in Virginia, and closed at Baltimore on the 28th of May following.

Preachers this year, 83; (Preachers last year, 82); Members, 14,986; (Members last year, 13,740); Increase in Preachers, 1; Increase in Members, 1,248.

David Abbott, James Thomas, James Mallory, and John Coleman, desisted from traveling; and Henry Medcalf and William Wright had died. This is the first time we find an account taken of those who had died, and nothing more is said of them than simply to record their deaths.

Among other things, they passed resolutions to collect money by a general yearly subscription in every circuit toward building new chapels, and discharging the debts on those already erected — to carry the rule passed last year on slavery into execution, except in Virginia — to improve the singing, by keeping close to Mr. Wesley’s tunes and hymns — and to conform to his advice respecting receiving European Methodist preachers, as expressed in the preceding letter.

There was a considerable revival this year in some of the frontier settlements, and the prospects of future usefulness were brightening every day, the preachers and people feeling the beneficial effects of the new government, which had been established after the loss of so much blood and treasure.

Mr. Lee, in his History of the Methodists, informs us that to this time they had not printed the minutes, but preserved them only in manuscript. They have since, however, been collected

and printed; and it is from these printed minutes that the principal facts in respect to the doings of the conferences have been taken.

CHAPTER 3

An account of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, with some arguments in its defense.

We have arrived at a very important period in the history of Methodism in this country. And as so much has been said respecting the constituting of the Methodist societies here into an independent church, I shall, in the first place, give a detail of the facts in the case, and, secondly, offer some arguments in defense of the measure.

I. Hitherto the Methodists, both in Europe and America, had been considered as a society within a church — in Great Britain they considered themselves as members of the establishment — in America as members of that denomination to which they might be attached. The preachers in both hemispheres, not having been consecrated to their work by the imposition of hands, were distinguished as “lay-preachers,” and had not, except in the instance heretofore narrated, presumed to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper. Under these circumstances much uneasiness had been manifested both in Europe and America, more especially here. But all solicitation, whether from the preachers or people, for the establishment of a separate church, had been strenuously resisted by Mr. Wesley, as being foreign to his primary design, and incompatible with the principles he had avowed from the beginning of his ministry. He commenced his ministerial labor with the single intention of reviving evangelical religion in the Church, by preaching her doctrines and enforcing her discipline. This was the state of things at the time of which we are now speaking.

As, however, the colonies had now become an independent government, no longer under the control of Great Britain, either in civil or ecclesiastical matters, Mr. Wesley began to relax from the sternness with which he had heretofore resisted the solicitations of the American Methodists, and to think seriously of granting their requests; and after consulting with his most intimate friends respecting the propriety of the measure — for of its lawfulness he had no doubt — he resolved to grant their request, and adopted means to carry the resolution into effect. “At the conference held in Leeds, in 1784, he declared his intention of sending Dr. Coke and some other preachers to America. Mr. Richard Whatcoat and Mr. Thomas Vasey offered themselves as missionaries for that purpose, and were accepted. Before they sailed, Mr. Wesley abridged the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England, and wrote to Dr. Coke, then in London, desiring him to meet him in Bristol, to receive fuller powers, and to bring the Rev. Mr. Creighton with him. The doctor and Mr. Creighton accordingly met him in Bristol when, with their assistance, he ordained Mr. Richard Whatcoat and Mr. Thomas Vasey presbyters for America; and being peculiarly attached to every rite of the Church of England, he afterward ordained Dr. Coke a superintendent, giving him

letters of ordination under his hand and seal, and at the same time the following letter, to be printed and circulated in America: ”⁴

“Bristol, Sept. 10th, 1784

To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America:

- 1 By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the British empire, and erected into independent states. The English government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the congress, partly by the state assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these states desire my advice: and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch.
- 2 Lord King’s Account of the Primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our traveling preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace’ sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church, to which I belonged.
- 3 But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, and but few parish ministers: so for some hundred miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord’s supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end: and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man’s right, by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest.
- 4 I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury, to be joint superintendents⁵ over our brethren in North America. As also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders among them, by baptizing and ministering the Lord’s supper.
- 5 If any one will point out a more rational and Scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

4 Moore’s Life of Wesley, vol. ii, p.273.

5 As the translators of our version of the Bible have used the English word “bishop” instead of “superintendent,” it has been thought by us that it would appear more Scriptural to adopt their term “bishop.” — Discipline

- 6 It has indeed been proposed to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object,
 - 1 I desired the bishop of London to ordain one only; but could not prevail:
 - 2 If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay:
 - 3 If they would ordain them now, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us!
 - 4 As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the state and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again; either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free. John Wesley.”

The following is the letter of ordination which Mr. Wesley gave to Dr. Coke: “To all to whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late Fellow of Lincoln College, in Oxford, Presbyter of the Church of England, sendeth greeting:

“Whereas many of the people in the southern provinces of North America, who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper, according to the usage of the same Church, and where as there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers:

“Know all men, that I, John Wesley, think myself to providentially called at this time to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America And, therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory, I have this day set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of my hands, and prayer, (being assisted by other ordained ministers,) Thomas Coke, Dr. of civil law, a presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

“John Wesley.”

Being thus furnished with the proper credentials, in the month of September Dr. Coke, in company with Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey, set sail for America, and landed in the city of New York on the 3d of November, 1784. From thence they proceeded through Philadelphia

to the state of Delaware, where, on the 15th day of the same month, he met Mr. Asbury at Barratt's chapel. Mr. Asbury gives the following account of this meeting: —

"Sunday 15. I came to Barratt's chapel. Here, to my great joy, I met those dear men of God, Dr. Coke and Richard Whatcoat. We were greatly comforted together. The doctor preached on Christ our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Having had no opportunity of conversing with them before public worship, I was greatly surprised to see brother Whatcoat assist by taking the cup in the administration of the sacrament. I was shocked when first informed of the intention of these my brethren in coming to this country: it may be of God. My answer then was, If the preachers unanimously choose me, I shall not act in the capacity I have hitherto done by Mr. Wesley's appointment. The design of organizing the Methodists into an independent Episcopal Church was opened to the preachers present, and it was agreed to call a general conference, to meet at Baltimore the ensuing Christmas; as also that brother Garrettson go off to Virginia to give notice thereof to the brethren in the south."

According to this arrangement, Mr. Garrettson set off immediately on his southern journey, sending letters to those he could not see; and Dr. Coke spent the intermediate time in visiting various parts of the country and preaching to the people. On Friday the 26th, Mr. Asbury says, "I observed this day as a day of fasting and prayer, that I might know the will of God in the matter; that is to come before the conference. The preachers and people seem to be much pleased with the projected plan; I myself am led to think it is of the Lord. I am not tickled with the honor to be gained. I see danger in the way. My soul waits upon God. O that he may lead us in the way we should go!"

In conformity with the above arrangement, December 25th, sixty out of the eighty-three preachers then in the traveling connection, assembled in the city of Baltimore for the conference, in which Dr. Coke presided, assisted by Mr. Asbury; and the first act of the conference was, by a unanimous vote, to elect Dr. Coke and Francis Asbury as general superintendents; for although Mr. Asbury had been appointed to that high office by Mr. Wesley, yet he declined acting in that capacity independently of the suffrages of his brethren over whom he must preside. After his election, being first ordained a deacon, then an elder, Mr. Asbury was consecrated by Dr. Coke, assisted by several elders, to the office of a superintendent, in the manner set forth in the following certificate: —

"Know all men by these presents, That I, Thomas Coke, Doctor of civil law, late of Jesus College, in the university of Oxford, presbyter of the Church of England, and superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America; under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory; by the imposition of my hands and prayer, (being assisted by two ordained elders,) did on the twenty-fifth day of this month, December, set apart Francis Asbury for the office of a deacon in the aforesaid Methodist Episcopal Church. And also on the twenty-sixth day of the said month, did, by the imposition of my hands and prayer,

(being assisted by the said elders,) set apart the said Francis Asbury for the office of elder in the said Methodist Episcopal Church. And on this twenty-seventh day of the said month, being the day of the date hereof, have, by the imposition of my hands and prayer, (being assisted by the said elders,) set apart the said Francis Asbury for the office of a superintendent in the said Methodist Episcopal Church, a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 27th day of December, in the year of our Lord 1784.

“Thomas Coke.”

One of the elders who assisted at the consecration of Mr. Asbury, was the Rev. Mr. Otterbine, a minister of the German Church. Having enjoyed an intimate acquaintance with this pious and evangelical minister of Jesus Christ, and having full fellowship with him as a laborious and useful servant of God, Mr. Asbury requested that he might be associated with Dr. Coke and the other elders in the performance of this solemn ceremony.

The following persons were elected, twelve of whom were consecrated elders: Freeborn Garrettson, William Gill, Le Roy Cole, John Hagerty, James O. Cromwell, John Tunnel, Nelson Reed, Jeremiah Lambert, Reuben Ellis, James O’Kelly, Richard Ivey, Beverly Allen,⁶ and Henry Willis. Mr. Garrettson and Mr. Cromwell were set apart especially for Nova Scotia, to which place they soon after went; and their labors and success will be noticed in the proper place. Mr. Lambert was ordained for the Island of Antigua, in the West Indies. John Dickens, Caleb Boyer, and Ignatus Pigman, were elected deacons.

II. Having thus given an account of these transactions, we proceed to offer a few arguments in their defense. Let it be recollected,

1. That there was, a loud call for these things. Most of the clergy of the English Church, during the revolution, had fled from their flocks; and those who remained, with very few exceptions, were fit for any thing rather than ministers of the gospel. From the hands of such men the Methodists felt unwilling to receive the ordinances. As to the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, they would neither baptize the children unless at least one of the parents professed faith in their doctrines, nor admit them to the communion table unless they became members of their church. The Baptists were more rigid still, as they could fellowship none unless they had been baptized by immersion. To neither of these conditions could the Methodists submit. Besides, by these denominations, the Methodists were treated as heretics, on account of their opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of decrees, and the final perseverance of the saints. Hence a necessity, originating from the state of things in this country, compelled the Methodists either to remain without the ordinances, to administer

⁶ Mr. Allen was not ordained until the conference in 1785; and Mr. Willis not being present, was ordained a few weeks afterward. — Lee.

them by unconsecrated hands, or to provide for them in the manner they did. Those who disclaim all dependence upon the argument derived from the necessity of the case, would do well to inquire whether any man can be justified in doing an unnecessary work — a work that might be scripturally dispensed with. It appears to the writer, that if there be no weight in this argument, then it follows that Mr. Wesley, and those who acted with him in this solemn affair were guilty of a work of supererogation, and therefore cannot be justified on any principle whatever, either of Scripture, reason, or conscience.

2. Let it be recollected also, that those who consecrated Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, namely, Mr. Wesley, Dr. Coke, and Mr. Creighton, were all regular presbyters in the Church of England; and that those who laid hands on Dr. Coke, and set him apart as a superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal church in America, were also presbyters regularly ordained to that office.

3. It appears manifest from several passages of Scripture, particularly [Acts xiii, 1, 2](#), and [I Tim. iv, 14](#), and the testimonies of the primitive fathers of the church, that presbyters and bishops were of the same order, and that they originally possessed the power of ordination.

4. The doctrine of uninterrupted succession from the apostles, in a third order, by a triple consecration, as distinct from and superior to presbyters, has been discarded by many of the most eminent ecclesiastical writers, as resting upon no solid foundation, not being susceptible of proof from any authentic source.

5. Mr. Wesley possessed a right over the Methodists which no man else did or could possess, because they were his spiritual children, raised up under his preaching and superintendence, and hence they justly looked to him for a supply of the ordinances of Jesus Christ.

6. Therefore in exercising the power with which the divine Head of the Church had invested him, he invaded no other man's right, nor yet assumed that which did not belong to him.

7. Hence he did not, as the objection which this argument is designed to refute supposes, ordain either presbyters or a bishop for the English Church, nor for any other church then existing, but simply and solely for the Methodist societies in America. And therefore in doing this necessary work, he neither acted inconsistently with himself as a presbyter of the Church of England, nor incompatible with his frequent avowals to remain in that Church, and not to separate from it.

8. For in fact, in organizing the Methodist Episcopal Church he did not separate either from the English or Protestant Episcopal Church; for that Church had no jurisdiction here, and the Methodist was organized some time before the Protestant Episcopal Church had an existence. Hence he acted perfectly consistent with himself, with all his avowals of attachment to the Church of England, while he proceeded to organize a church here; for while he did this, and thereby established a separate and independent church in America, where the English Church had no jurisdiction, he and his people in England still remained members of the Establishment.

9. While the Scriptures are silent in respect to the particular form of church government which should be established, they certainly allow of an Episcopal form, because it is not incompatible with any known precept or usage of primitive Christianity.

10. This is farther manifest from the fact, that the apostles and evangelists did exercise a jurisdiction over the entire church, presbyters, deacons, and people, though at the same time there is no proof that as to order, created such by a third consecration, they were higher than the presbyters.

11. Distinguishing, therefore, between the power of ordination and the power of jurisdiction, we may see how an Episcopal government may be created by a presbyterial ordination, and hence justify the act of Mr. Wesley and his associates in setting apart Dr. Coke to the office of a general superintendent.

These arguments are merely stated here as the grounds on which the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church is justified, referring the reader who may wish to see them in detail, with the proofs on which they rest for support, to the book recently published, called "An Original Church of Christ." In that performance he will see all objections met, and I trust fully answered, and the proceedings of Mr. Wesley and his co-workers amply vindicated.

12. Another ground of defense is in the character of those who were employed in this transaction. As to the Rev. John Wesley, it is almost needless now to say any thing in his commendation. In him were concentrated all the elements of a great man and by a conscientious improvement of his gifts, having been made a partaker of "like precious faith," he was as much distinguished by his goodness as by his greatness; but all his other endowments were propelled on by his inextinguishable thirst for the salvation of his fellow-men, and fully employed, as an evangelist, in the grand cause of Jesus Christ. And such were the effects of these labors, that at the time of which we are now speaking there were no less than sixty-four thousand one hundred and fifty-five members of society, and one hundred and ninety-five preachers in Europe; and fourteen thousand nine hundred and eighty-eight members, and eighty-three preachers in America; making in all seventy-nine thousand one hundred and forty-three members, and two hundred and seventy-eight preachers. These had been raised up through his instrumentality in the short space of forty-five years, as seals to his ministry, and as evidences of his call to the work in which he was engaged. Of his call, therefore, and qualification for the work of an evangelist, there can be no doubt, any more than there should be of his right, as the spiritual father of this numerous family, to provide them with all the means of grace.

And as Dr. Thomas Coke took an active and conspicuous part in the organization and establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church, it seems proper that a short account should be given of him in this place. He received his education at the university of Oxford, and though in his early days he was infected with infidel principles, yet by reading the works of Bishop Sherlock, he was convinced of the truth of Christianity, and was ordained first a

deacon and then a presbyter in the Church of England. But like most of the clergy in that day, he was a stranger to experimental godliness. Hearing, however, of Mr. Wesley, he sought and obtained an interview with that apostolic man, and by him was instructed more perfectly in the ways of the Lord. Not long after he fully joined himself with Mr. Wesley, was made a partaker of justification by faith in Jesus Christ and became an active and zealous assistant to the founder of Methodism. For about six years previous to his sailing to America, he had given full proof of his zealous attachment to the cause of Christ, of his love to Methodist doctrine and discipline, and of his entire devotedness to the best interests of mankind. This was the man on whom Mr. Wesley fixed to carry the designs toward his American brethren into execution. And though it may be said that the doctor was somewhat precipitate in some of his movements, yet it is certain that he gave evidence of the most ardent piety; of a chastened zeal in the cause of God, and of deep devotion to the interests of the Redeemer. Of the Rev. Mr. Creighton it is enough to say, that he was a regularly ordained presbyter of the Church of England, a man of a sound mind and of unquestionable piety. He had for several years devoted himself to the cause of God in connection with Mr. Wesley.

These were the men who consecrated first Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey to the office of presbyters, and then these latter assisted in the ordination of Dr. Coke to the office of a superintendent over the American Methodists.

Let us now look for a moment at the character of Mr. Asbury, and see if he was not fully qualified for the high and holy trust confided to him. We have already seen in the preceding chapters the circumstances under which he was moved to come to this country as a missionary of the cross, the motives by which he was actuated, as well as the manner in which he discharged his duties up to the time in which he took upon himself the office of a superintendent. By these things it will be seen, I think, that he was "not a novice" in the things of God, in intellectual endowments, in moral courage, nor yet in that expansive benevolence which should characterize a primitive evangelist or bishop. He had, indeed, given such "full proof of his ministry," both as respects his spiritual and mental qualifications, and his indefatigable labors "in word and doctrine," as to insure his election to that high office by a unanimous vote of his brethren — those very brethren too, among whom he had labored for about fifteen years. And his subsequent life afforded undeniable evidence that their choice had fallen upon the right man.

Now, let those who question the validity of our ordination, and the consequent right we have to administer the ordinances, put their finger upon any organization of a church since the apostolic days, by any number of men, and if they will find stronger marks of a divine call to do these things, or a more urgent necessity for them, arising out of the circumstances of the times, we will then review our ground, and hesitate to pronounce the Methodist Episcopal Church Scriptural and apostolical in her orders and ordinances. Its founders, under the protection of Almighty God, were all men of learning, of deep experience in the

things of God, of unquestionable piety, regularly consecrated presbyters of the Church; and the leader in this whole, affair was the father of the entire family of spiritual children; and therefore possessed rights over them which no one else possibly could.

To all this it may be said “that the people were not consulted.” But their wishes were already known. They had been expressed over and over again; and that their voice was in exact accordance with the proceedings of the conference, is demonstrable from numerous testimonies. Mr. Lee says, “The Methodists were pretty generally pleased at our becoming a church, and heartily united together in the plan which the conference had adopted; and from that time religion greatly revived.”

Mr. William Watters, the oldest American Methodist preacher, says, in his memoirs of himself, “We became, instead of a religious society, a separate Church. This gave great satisfaction through all the societies.”

The Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, in his Memoir of Bishop Asbury, after stating the fact of our having become an independent Church, says, “This step met with general approbation both among the preachers and members. Perhaps we shall seldom find such unanimity of sentiment upon any question of such magnitude.”

Nor has a murmur been heard, except from a few disaffected individuals, through all our borders, on account of the measures which were adopted at that conference, and the consequences which have resulted fully sustain the opinions above expressed. What is meant by these results is, not merely making proselytes to the system; for this of itself is no evidence either for or against any cause; but the real reformation in heart and life of thousands and tens of thousands of immortal souls. If, therefore, the turning of sinners “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God,” may be pleaded in favor of any system of operations, then may we say God has fixed the seal of his approbation upon the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church; for it has been instrumental of doing this in the most effectual and extensive manner in these United States.⁷

It has been already stated that Mr. Wesley made an abridgment of the Book of Common Prayer, as used in the Church of England, and recommended that it should be used by the preachers and people in this country. This accordingly was done in some of the larger towns and cities; but this practice, as well as that of wearing gowns, which the superintendents and some of the elders did for a season, was soon laid aside, on account of the opposition which was generally manifested against it, with the exception of the ordinations and sacramental services, which are retained and used at the present time. The following articles of religion were adopted at this conference, and published: —

7 See Original Church of Christ.

I. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness: the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

II. Of the Word, Or Son of God, who was made very Man

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt but also for actual sins of men.

III. Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith, he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

IV. Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

V. Of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture, we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

Of the Names of the Canonical Books

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher, Cantica, or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the greater, Twelve Prophets the less:

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

VI. Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

VII. Of Original or Birth-Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk,) but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

VIII. Of Free Will

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.

X. Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings: — Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

X. Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by its fruit.

XI. Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary works, besides over and above God's commandments, which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required: whereas Christ saith plainly, When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

XII. Of Sin after Justification

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification: after we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend, our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

XIII. Of the Church

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

XIV. Of Purgatory

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshipping and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the word of God.

XV. Of speaking in the Congregation in such a Tongue as the People understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

XVI. Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession; but rather they are certain signs of grace and God's good will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.

These are two sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the gospel; that is to say, baptism and the supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for sacraments of the gospel, being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of baptism and the Lord's supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation: but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.

XVII. Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized, but it is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the church.

XVIII. Of the Lord's Supper

The supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper, is faith.

The sacrament of the Lord's supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

XIX. Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people: for both the parts of the Lord's supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christians alike.

XX. Of the one Oblation of Christ, finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore, the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable, and dangerous deceit.

XXI. Of the Marriage of Ministers

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage: therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

XXII. Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike: for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of

countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

XXIII. Of the Rulers of the United States of America

The congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the general act of confederation, and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

XXIV. Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

XXV. Of a Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

That the reader may have an entire view of the doings of this conference, I think it expedient to give him the rules as they were then adopted, noticing, as we proceed in our history, such alterations or new rules as have been incorporated into the Discipline from time to time. After giving a short account of the rise of Methodism in Europe and America in Section I., they proceeded, in Section II., to state

The Method of holding a Conference, and the Business to be done therein.

It is desired that all things be considered as in the immediate presence of God. That every person speak freely whatever is in his heart.

Question 1. How may we best improve our time at the conference?

Answer

- 1 While we are conversing, let us have an especial care to set God always before us.
- 2 In the intermediate hours, let us redeem all the time we can for private exercises.
- 3 Therein let us give ourselves to prayer for one another, and for a blessing on our labor.

Question 2. What is the method wherein we usually proceed in a conference?

Answer We inquire —

- 1 What preachers are admitted?
- 2 Who remain on trial?
- 3 Who are admitted on trial?
- 4 Who desist from traveling?
- 5 Are there any objections to any of the preachers? Who are named one by one.
- 6 How are the preachers stationed this year?
- 7 What numbers are in society?
- 8 What is collected for the contingent expenses?
- 9 How is this expended?
- 10 What is contributed toward the fund for the superannuated preachers, and the widows and orphans of the preachers?
- 11 What demands are there upon it?
- 12 Where and when shall our next conferences begin?

Question 3. Is there any other business to be done in the conference?

Answer The electing and ordaining of bishops, elders, and deacons.

After assigning some reasons for the organization which had just been accomplished, and the manner in which it had been done, the fourth section concludes thus on the manner of constituting a bishop, and of his duties and responsibilities: —

Question 2. How is a bishop to be constituted in future?

Answer By the election of a majority of the conference, and the laying on of the hands of a bishop.

Question 3. What is his duty?

Answer To preside as moderator in our conferences; to fix the appointments of the preachers for the several circuits; and in the intervals of the conference, to change, receive, or suspend preachers, as necessity may require to travel through as many circuits as he can, and to direct in the spiritual business of the societies; as also to ordain bishops, elders, and deacons.

N.[athan B[angs]. The bishop has obtained liberty, by the suffrage of the conference, to ordain local preachers to the office of deacons, provided they obtain a testimonial from the society to which they belong, and from the stewards of the circuit, signed by three traveling preachers, three deacons, and three elders, (one of them being a presiding elder;) the names of those nominated being read in the conference previous to their ordination.

Question 4. To whom is the bishop amenable for his conduct?

Answer To the conference, who have power to expel him for improper conduct, if they see it necessary.

Question 5. If the bishop ceases from traveling at large among the people, shall he still exercise his office among us in any degree?

Answer If he ceases from traveling without the consent of the conference, he shall not hereafter exercise any ministerial function whatsoever in our church.

SECTION V.

On the constituting of Elders, and their Duty

Question 1. How is an elder constituted?

Answer By the election of a majority of the conference, and by the laying on of the hands of a bishop, and of the elders that are present.

Question 2. What is his duty?

Answer

- 1 To travel through his appointed district.
- 2 To administer baptism and the Lord's supper; and to perform all parts of divine service.
- 3 In the absence of a bishop, to take charge of all the deacons, traveling and local preachers, and exhorters.
- 4 To change, receive, or suspend preachers.
- 5 To direct in the transaction of the spiritual business of his circuit.
- 6 To take care that every part of our discipline be enforced.
- 7 To aid in the public collections.

To attend his bishop when present, and give him when absent all necessary information, by letter, of the state of his district.

N.[athan] B[angs]. No elder that ceases to travel, without the consent of the conference, certified under the hand of a bishop, shall on any account exercise the peculiar functions of his office among us.

SECTION VI.

On the constituting of Deacons, and their Duty

Question 1. How is a deacon constituted?

Answer By the election of a majority of the conference, and the laying on of the hand, of a bishop.

Question 2. What is the duty of a deacon?

Answer

- 1 To baptize, and perform the office of matrimony in the absence of the elder.
- 2 To assist the elder in administering the Lord's supper.
- 3 To see that the other preachers in this circuit behave well, and want nothing.
- 4 To renew the tickets quarterly, and regulate the bands.
- 5 To appoint all the stewards and leaders, and change them when he sees it necessary.
- 6 To hold watch-nights and love-feasts.
- 7 To hold quarterly meetings, and therein diligently to inquire both into the temporal and spiritual state of each society.
- 8 To take care that every society be duly supplied with books: particularly with the SAINTS' REST, INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHILDREN, and the PRIMITIVE PHYSIC; which ought to be in every house.
- 9 To take an exact account of the number in Society, and to bring it to the conference.
- 10 To send an account of his circuit every quarter to his elder.
- 11 To meet the men and women apart in the large societies, once a quarter.
- 12 To overlook the accounts of all the stewards.
- 13 To appoint a person to receive the quarterly collection in the classes, and to be present at the time of receiving it.
- 14 To see that public collections be made quarterly, if need be.
- 15 To move a yearly subscription through those circuits that can bear it, for building churches.
- 16 To choose a committee of lay-members, to make a just application of the money, where it is most wanted.

Question 3. What other directions shall we give the deacons?

Answer Several

- 1 To take a regular catalogue of the societies in towns and cities, as they live in streets.
- 2 Leave your successor a particular account of the state of the circuit.
- 3 See that every band-leader have the rules of the bands.
- 4 Vigorously, but calmly, enforce the rules concerning needless ornaments and drams.
- 5 As soon as there are four men or women believers in any place, put them into a band.
- 6 Suffer no love-feast to last above an hour and a half.
- 7 Warn all from time to time, that none are to remove from one circuit to another, without a note of recommendation from the elder or deacon, in these words: A. B., the bearer, has been an acceptable member of our society in C., and inform them, that without such a certificate, they will not be received into other societies.
- 8 Everywhere recommend decency and cleanliness.
- 9 Read the rules of the society, with the aid of the preachers, once a year, in every congregation, and once a quarter in every society.
- 10 On any dispute between two or more of the members of our society, which cannot be settled by the parties concerned, the deacon shall inquire into the circumstances of the case, and having consulted the stewards and leaders, shall, if agreeable to their advice, recommend to the contending parties a reference consisting of one arbiter, chosen by the plaintiff, and another by the defendant; which two arbiters so chosen, shall nominate a third (the three arbiters being members of our society) and the decision of any two of them shall be final. But if either of the parties refuse to abide by such a decision, he shall be immediately expelled.

N. B. If any member of our society enter into a lawsuit with another member before those measures are taken, he shall be expelled.

No deacon that ceases to travel without the consent of the conference, certified under the hand of a bishop, shall on any account exercise the peculiar functions of his office.

SECTION VII.

On the Method of receiving Preachers, and their Duty.

Question 1. How is a preacher to be received?

Answer

- 1 By the conference.
- 2 In the interval of the conference, by the bishop, or an elder, until the sitting of the conference.
- 3 When his name is not printed in the minutes, he must receive a written license from his elder or bishop.

Question 2. What is the duty of a preacher?

Answer

- 1 To preach.
- 2 To meet the societies or classes and bands.
- 3 To visit the sick.
- 4 To meet the leaders.
- 5 To preach in the morning, where he can get hearers.

N. B. We are fully determined never to drop morning preaching; and to preach at five o'clock in the summer, and at six in the winter, wherever it is practicable.

Question 3. Are the preachers to read our liturgy?

Answer All that have received a written direction for that purpose, under the hand of a bishop or elder, may read the liturgy as often as they think it expedient.

Question 4. What are the directions given to a preacher?

Answer

- 1 Be diligent. Never be unemployed; never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
- 2 Be serious. Let your motto be, holiness to the Lord. Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.
- 3 Converse sparingly and cautiously with women, 1 Timothy v, 2.
- 4 Take no step toward marriage without first consulting with your brethren.

- 5 Believe evil of no one; unless ye see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on every thing. You know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.
- 6 Speak evil of no one: else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast, till you come to the person concerned.
- 7 Tell every one under your care what you think wrong in his conduct and temper, and that plainly as soon as may be: else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire cut of your bosom.
- 8 Do not affect the gentleman. A preacher of the gospel is the servant of all.
- 9 Be ashamed of nothing but sin.
- 10 Be punctual. Do every thing exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but conscience' sake; not for fear of punishment, but for conscience' sake.
- 11 You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always not only to those that want, but to those that want you most.
- 12 **Observe.** it is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society only: but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness, without which they cannot see the Lord. And remember! a Methodist preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist discipline! Therefore you will need to exercise all the sense and grace you have.
- 13 Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the gospel. As such, it is your duty to employ your time in the manner which we direct: in preaching and visiting from house to house: in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labor with us in the Lord's vineyard, it is needful you should do that part of the work which we advise, at those times and places which we judge most for his glory.

Question 5. What method do we use in receiving a preacher at the conference?

Answer After solemn fasting and prayer, every person proposed shall then be asked, before the conference, the following directions, (with any others which may be thought necessary,) viz. Have you faith in Christ? Are you going on to perfection? Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you groaning after it? Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and his work? Do you know the rules of the society? Of the bands? Do you keep them? Do you constantly attend the sacrament? Have you read the form of

discipline? Are you willing to conform to it? Have you considered the rules of a preacher; especially the first, tenth, and twelfth? Will you keep them for conscience' sake? Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God? Will you endeavor not to speak too long or too loud? Will you diligently instruct the children in every place? Will you visit from house to house? Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example? Are you in debt?

We may then, if he gives satisfaction, receive him as a probationer, by giving him the form of discipline, inscribed thus: To A. B. "You think it your duty to call sinners to repentance. Make full proof hereof and we shall rejoice to receive you as a fellow-laborer." Let him, then, carefully read and weigh what is contained therein; that if he has any doubt, it may be removed. Observe! Taking on trial is entirely different from admitting a preacher. One on trial, may be either admitted or rejected, without doing him any wrong; otherwise it would be no trial at all. Let every deacon and elder explain this to those who are on trial, as well as to those who are in future to be proposed for trial.

After two years' probation, being recommended by the elders and deacons present, and examined by the bishop, he may be received into full connection, by giving him the form of discipline, inscribed thus: "As long as you freely consent to, and earnestly endeavor to walk by these, rules, we shall rejoice to acknowledge you as a fellow laborer."

N. B. Let none who are local, preach or exhort in any of our societies without a note of permission from, the deacon: let every local preacher or exhorter take care to have this renewed yearly: and let every elder insist upon it.

SECTION VIII.

Of the Collections that are to be made, and how the Money is to be expended

Question 1. How many collections are to be made in a year?

Answer

- 1 A quarterly collection from the members of the Society to supply the preachers; and when that is deficient, a public quarterly collection. If there be any overplus, let one-third of it be reserved for future deficiencies; one-third be given to the poor in general; and one-third applied to the building or improving of our churches. If there is money left in the hands of the stewards at the close of the year, let it be sent to the conference.
- 2 A yearly collection from all our members that are of ability, for the building of convenient churches.
- 3 A collection at love-feasts, and on sacramental occasions, for the poor of our own society.
- 4 An annual collection or subscription for the college.

- 5 An annual public collection for the contingencies of the conference; which shall be applied,
 - 1 To discharge the deficiencies of those preachers who shall not have received their full salary in their circuits; and,
 - 2 To defray the expenses of our missions to distant parts of the continent.

Question 2. What is the regular annual salary of the bishops, elders, deacons, and preachers?

Answer Twenty-four pounds Pennsylvania currency, and their traveling expenses.

Question 3. What shall be annually allowed the wives of the married preachers?

Answer Twenty-four pounds Pennsylvania currency, if they are in want of it.

N. B. That no ministers or preachers, traveling or local, shall receive any support either in money or other provision for their services, without the knowledge of the stewards of the circuits, and its being properly entered quarterly on the books.

SECTION IX.

On Class-Meeting

Question 1. How may the leaders of classes be rendered more useful?

Answer

- 1 Let each of them be diligently examined concerning his method of meeting a class. Let this be done with all possible exactness, at least once a quarter. In order to this, take sufficient time.
- 2 Let each leader carefully inquire how every soul in his class prospers: not only how each person observes the outward rules, but how he grows in the knowledge and love of God.
- 3 Let the leaders converse with the elder and deacon frequently and freely.

Question 2. Can any thing more be done in order to make the class-meetings lively and profitable?

Answer

- 1 Change improper leaders.
- 2 Let the leaders frequently meet each other's classes.
- 3 Let us observe which leaders are the most useful: and let these meet the other classes as often as possible.

- 4 See that all the leaders be not only men of sound judgment, but men truly devoted to God.

Question 3. How shall we prevent improper persons from insinuating themselves into the society?

Answer

- 1 Give tickets to none until they are recommended by a leader with whom they have met at least six months on trial.
- 2 Give notes to none but those who are recommended by one you know, or until they have met three or four times in a class.
- 3 Read the rules to them the first time they meet.

Question 4. How shall we be more strict in receiving and excluding members?

Answer In large societies we may read the names of those that are received and excluded once a quarter.

Question 5. What shall we do with those members of society who willfully and repeatedly neglect to meet their class?

Answer

- 1 Let the elder, deacon, or one of the preachers visit them, whenever it is practicable, and explain to them the consequence if they continue to neglect, viz. exclusion.
- 2 If they do not amend, let the deacon exclude them in the society; showing that they are laid aside for a breach of our rules of discipline; and not for immoral conduct.

SECTION X.

On the Duty of Preachers to God, themselves, and one another

Question 1. How shall a preacher be qualified for his charge?

Answer By walking closely with God, and having his work greatly at heart: and by understanding and loving discipline, ours in particular.

Question 2. Do we sufficiently watch over each other?

Answer We do not. Should we not frequently ask each other, Do you walk closely with God? Have you now fellowship with the Father and the Son? At what hour do you rise? Do you punctually observe the morning and evening hour of retirement, viz. five o'clock? Do you spend the day in the manner which the conference advises? Do you converse seriously,

usefully, and closely? To be more particular: Do you use all the means of grace yourself, and enforce the use of them on all other persons? They are either instituted or prudential.

I. The instituted are,

- 1 Prayer; private, family, public; consisting of deprecation, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving. Do you use each of these? Do you forecast daily wherever you are, to secure time for private devotion? Do you practice it everywhere? Do you ask everywhere, Have you family prayer? Do you ask individuals; Do you use private prayer every morning and evening in particular?
- 2 Searching the Scriptures, by
 - 1 Reading; constantly, some part of every day, regularly, all the Bible in order: carefully, with Mr. Wesley's notes: seriously, with prayer before and after: fruitfully, immediately practicing what you learn there?
 - 2 Meditating: at set times? By rule?
 - 3 Hearing: every opportunity? with prayer before, and after? Have you a Bible always about you?
- 3 The Lord's supper: Do you use this at every opportunity? With solemn prayer before? With earnest and deliberate self-devotion?
- 4 Fasting: Do you use as much abstinence and fasting every week, as your health, strength, and labor will permit?
- 5 Christian conference: Are you convinced how important and how difficult it is to order your conversation aright? Is it always in grace, seasoned with salt; meet to minister grace to the hearers? Do you not converse too long at a time? Is not an hour commonly enough? Would it not be well always to have a determinate end in view, and to pray before and after it?

II. Prudential means we may use, either as Christians, as Methodists, as preachers, or as ministers.

6. As Christians: What particular rules have you in order to grow in grace? What arts of holy living?
7. As Methodists: Do you never miss your class or band?
8. As preachers: Do you meet every society? also, the leaders and bands?
9. As ministers: Have you thoroughly considered your duty? And do you make a conscience of executing every part of it?

These means may be used without fruit. But there are some means which cannot; namely, watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, exercise of the presence of God.

- 1 Do you steadily watch against the world? yourself? your besetting sin?
- 2 Do you deny yourself every useless pleasure of sense? imagination? honor? Are you temperate in all things? instance in food.
 - 1 Do you use only that kind, and that degree which is best both for your body and soul? Do you see the necessity of this?
 - 2 Do you eat no flesh suppers?
 - 3 Do you eat no more at each meal than is necessary? Are you not heavy or drowsy after dinner?
 - 4 Do you use only that kind and that degree of drink which is best both for your body and soul?
 - 5 Do you choose and use water for your common drink? and only take wine medicinally or sacramentally?
- 3 Wherein do you take up your cross daily? Do you cheerfully bear your cross (whatever is grievous to nature) as a gift of God, and labor to profit thereby?
- 4 Do you endeavor to set God always before you? to see his eye continually fixed upon you? Never can you use these means but a blessing will ensue; and the more you use them, the more will you grow in grace.

SECTION XI.

On the Necessity of Union among ourselves

Let us be deeply sensible (from what we have known) of the evil of a division in principle, spirit, or practice, and the dreadful consequences to ourselves and others. If we are united, what can stand before us? if we divide, we shall destroy ourselves, the work of God, and the souls of our people.

Question 1. What can be done in order to a closer union with each other?

Answer

- 1 Let us be deeply convinced of the absolute necessity of it.
- 2 Pray earnestly for, and speak freely to each other.
- 3 When we meet, let us never part without prayer.

- 4 Take great care not to despise each other's gifts.
- 5 Never speak lightly of each other.
- 6 Let us defend each other's character in every thing, so far as is consistent with truth.
- 7 Labor in honor each to prefer the other before himself.

SECTION XII.

Of the Trial of those who think they are moved by the Holy Ghost to Preach

Question 1. How shall we try those who profess to be moved by the Holy Ghost to preach?

Answer

- 1 Let them be asked the following questions, viz. Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation?
- 2 Have they gifts (as well as grace) for the work? Have they (in some tolerable degree) a clear, sound understanding, a right judgment in the things of God, a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?
- 3 Have they fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin, and converted to God by their preaching?

As long as these three marks concur in any one, we believe he is called of God to preach. These we receive as sufficient proof that he is moved by the holy Ghost.

SECTION XIII.

Of the Spirit and Truth of Singing

Question 1. How shall we guard against formality in singing?

Answer

- 1 By choosing such hymns as are proper for the congregation.
- 2 By not singing too much at once; seldom more than five or six verses.
- 3 By suiting the time to the words.
- 4 By often stopping short, and asking the people, "Now!, do you know what you said last? Did you speak no more than you felt?"

- 5 Do not suffer the people to sing too slow. This naturally tends to formality, and is brought in by those who have either very strong or very weak voices.
- 6 In every large society let them learn to sing; and let them always learn our tunes first.
- 7 Let the women constantly sing their parts alone. Let no man sing with them, unless he understands the notes and sings the bass as it is composed in the tunebook.
- 8 Introduce no new tune till they are perfect in the old.
- 9 Recommend our tune-book; and if you cannot sing yourself, choose a person or two at each place to pitch the tune for you.
- 10 Exhort every person in the congregation to sing, not one in ten only.
- 11 Sing no hymns of your own composing.
- 12 If a preacher be present, let him alone give out the words.
- 13 When the singers would teach a tune to the congregation, they must sing only the tenor.

SECTION XIV.

Rules by which we should Continue Or Desist from Preaching at any Place

Question 1. Is it advisable for us to preach in as many places as we can, without forming any societies?

Answer By no means: we have made the trial in various places; and that for a considerable time. But all the seed has fallen by the way-side. There is scarce any fruit remaining.

Question 2. Where should we endeavor to preach most?

Answer

- 1 Where there are the greatest number of quiet and willing hearers.
- 2 Where there is the most fruit.

Question 3. Ought we not diligently to observe in what places God is pleased at any time to pour out his Spirit more abundantly?

Answer We ought; and at that time to send more laborers than usual into that part of the harvest.

SECTION XV.

On the Matter and Manner of Preaching, and other public exercises.

Question 1. What is the best general method of preaching?

Answer

- 1 To convince:
- 2 To offer Christ:
- 3 To invite:
- 4 To build up: and to do this in some measure in every sermon.

Question 2. Are there any smaller advices relative to preaching which might be of use to us?

Answer Perhaps these:

- 1 Be sure never to disappoint a congregation.
- 2 Begin precisely at the time appointed.
- 3 Let your whole deportment be serious, weighty, and solemn.
- 4 Always suit your subject to your audience.
- 5 Choose the plainest text you can.
- 6 Take care not to ramble, but keep to your text, and make out what you take in hand.
- 7 Take care of any thing awkward or affected, either in your gesture, phrase, or pronunciation.
- 8 Print nothing without the approbation of the conference, and one of the bishops.
- 9 Do not usually pray extempore above eight or ten minutes (at most) without intermission
- 10 Frequently read and enlarge upon a portion of Scripture; and let young preachers often exhort without taking a text.
- 11 Always avail yourself of the great festivals by preaching on the occasion.

Question 3. Have not some of us been led off from practical preaching, by what is called preaching Christ?

Answer The most effectual way of preaching Christ, is to preach him in all his offices; and to declare his law, as well as his gospel, both to believers and unbelievers. Let us strongly and closely insist upon inward and outward holiness in all its branches.

SECTION XVI.

Against Antinomianism

Question 1. What can be done to guard against Antinomianism?

Answer

- 1 Let all the preachers carefully read over Mr. Wesley's and Mr. Fletcher's tracts.
- 2 Let them frequently and explicitly preach the truth, but not in a controversial way. And let them take care to do it in love and gentleness: not in bitterness, returning railing for railing.
- 3 Answer all the objections of our people as occasion offers: but take care to do it in a Christian temper.

Question 2. Wherein lies our danger of it?

Answer

- 1 With regard to man's faithfulness, our Lord himself hath taught us to use the expression; therefore we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, upon his authority, that if a man is not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, God will not give him the true riches.
- 2 With regard to working for life, which our Lord expressly commands us to do. Labor (ergadzesthe) literally, work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life. And in fact every believer, till he comes to glory, works for as well as from life.
- 3 We have received it as a maxim, that "a man is to do nothing in order to justification." Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favor with God should cease from evil, and learn to do well. So God himself teacheth by the Prophet Isaiah. Whoever repents, should do works meet for repentance: and if this is not in order to find favor, what does he do them for?

Once more review the whole affair.

1. Who of us is now accepted of God?

He that now believes in Christ, with a loving, obedient heart.

2. But who among those that never heard of Christ?

He that, according to the light he has, feareth God, and worketh righteousness.

3. Is this the same with, He that is sincere?

Nearly, if not quite.

4. Is not this salvation by works?

Not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition.

5. The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions is drawn from matter of fact. God does in fact justify those who by their own confession neither fear God, nor wrought righteousness. Is this an exception to the general rule?

It is a doubt whether God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure that the person in question never did fear God and work righteousness?

His own thinking so is no proof; for we know how all that are convinced of sin undervalue themselves in every respect.

Does not talking without proper caution of a justified or sanctified state tend to mislead men? almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? whereas we are every moment pleasing or displeasing God, according to our works; according to the whole of our present inward tempers and outward behavior.

SECTION XVII.

How to provide for the Circuits in the time of Conference, and to preserve and increase the Work of God.

Question What can be done to supply the circuits during the sitting of the conference?

Answer

- 1 Let all the appointments stand according to the plan of the circuit it.
- 2 Engage as many local preachers and exhorters as will supply them; and let them be paid for their time in proportion to the salary of the traveling preachers.
- 3 If preachers and exhorters cannot attend, let some person of ability be appointed in every society to sing, pray, and read one of Mr. Wesley's sermons.
- 4 And if that cannot be done, let there be prayer meetings.
- 5 Wherever you can, in large societies, appoint prayer meetings.

Lastly, let a fast be published at every quarterly meeting for the Friday following; and a memorandum of it be written on all the class papers. Also be active in dispersing the books among the people.

SECTION XVIII.

Of employing our Time profitably when we are not traveling, or engaged in public exercises.

Question 1. What general method of employing our time would you advise us to?

Answer We advise you,

- 1 As often as possible to rise at four.
- 2 From four to five in the morning, and from five to six in the evening, to meditate, pray, and read the Scriptures, with Mr. Wesley's Notes, and the closely practical parts of what he has published.
- 3 From six in the morning till twelve (allowing an hour for breakfast) read in order, with much prayer, the Christian library and other pious books.

Question 2. Why is it that the people under our care are not better?

Answer Other reasons may concur; but the chief is, because we are not more knowing and more holy.

Question 3. But why are we not more knowing?

Answer Because we are idle. We forget our first rule, "Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary." I fear there is altogether a fault in this matter, and that few of us are clear. Which of you spends as many hours a day in God's work as you did formerly in man's work? We talk, talk — or read what comes next to hand. We must, absolutely must cure this evil, or betray the cause of God. But how?

- 1 Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly
- 2 Steadily spend all the morning in this employment at least five hours in four and twenty. "But I have no taste for reading." Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your former employment. "But I have no books." Be diligent to spread the books, and you will have the use them.

SECTION XIX.

On Baptism

Let every adult person, and the parents of every child to be baptized, have the choice either of immersion, sprinkling, or pouring.

N. B. We will on no account whatever receive a present for administering baptism, or the burial of the deed.

SECTION XX.

On the Lord's Supper

Question Are there any directions to be given concerning the administration of the Lord's supper?

Answer

- 1 Let those who choose receive it kneeling, and those who do not, either standing or sitting.
- 2 Let no person that is not a member of our society be admitted to the communion, without examination, and some token given by an elder or deacon.

SECTION XXI.

On unlawful Marriages

Question 1. Do we observe any evil which has lately prevailed among our societies?

Answer Many of our members have married with unawakened persons. This has produced bad effects; they have been either hindered for life, or turned back to perdition.

Question 2. What can be done to put a stop to this?

Answer

- 1 Let every preacher publicly enforce the apostle's caution, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."
- 2 Let him openly declare whoever does this will be expelled the society.
- 3 When any such is expelled, let a suitable exhortation be subjoined
- 4 Let all be exhorted to take no step in so weighty a matter, without advising with the most serious of their brethren.

Question 3. Ought any woman to marry without the consent of her parents?

Answer In general, she ought not. Yet there may be exceptions. For if;

- 1 A woman be under the necessity of marrying. If;
- 2 Her parents absolutely refuse to let her marry any Christian; then she may, nay, ought to marry without their consent. Yet even then a Methodist preacher ought not to be married to her.

SECTION XXII.

On Perfection

Let us strongly and explicitly exhort all believers to go on to perfection. That we may all speak the same thing, we ask once for all, Shall we defend this perfection, or give it up? We all agree to defend it, meaning thereby (as we did from the beginning) salvation from all sin, by the love of God and man filling our heart. The Papists say, "This cannot be attained till we have been refined by the fire of purgatory." Some professors say, "Nay, it will be attained as soon as the soul and body part." Others say, "It may be attained before we die: a moment after is too late." Is it so or not? we are; all agreed we may be saved from all sin, properly so called, before death, i.e., sinful tempers; but we cannot always speak or think or act, aright, as dwelling in houses of clay. The substance then is settled; but as to the circumstances, is the change gradual or instantaneous? It is both the one and the other. "But should we in preaching insist both on one and the other?" Certainly we should insist on the gradual change; and that earnestly and continually. And are there not reasons why we should insist on the instantaneous change? If there be such a blessed change before death, should we not encourage all believers to expect it? and the rather, because constant experience shows the more earnestly they expect this, the more swiftly and steadily does the gradual work of God go on in their souls; the more careful are they to grow in grace; the more zealous of good works, and the more punctual in their attendance on all the ordinances of God; (whereas just the contrary effects are observed whenever this expectation ceases.) They are saved by hope, by this hope of a total change, with a gradually increasing salvation. Destroy this hope, and that salvation stands still, or rather decreases daily. Therefore whoever will advance the gradual change in believers, should strongly insist on the instantaneous.

SECTION XXIII.

On Dress

Question Should we insist on the rules concerning dress?

Answer By all me Answer This is no time to give any encouragement to superfluity of apparel; therefore give no tickets to any till they have left off superfluous ornaments. In order to this,

- 1 Let every deacon read the thoughts upon dress, at least once a year, in every large society.
- 2 In visiting the classes be very mild, but very strict.
- 3 Allow of no exempt case, not even of a married woman: better one suffer than many.
- 4 Give no tickets to any that wear high heads, enormous bonnets, ruffles, or rings.

SECTION XXIV.

On the Privileges granted to serious Persons that are not of the Society

Question 1. How often shall we permit strangers to be present at the meeting of the society?

Answer At every other meeting of the society in every place, let no stranger be admitted. At other times they may; but the same persons not above twice or thrice.

Question 2. How often shall we permit strangers to be present at our love-feasts?

Answer Let them be admitted with the utmost caution; and the same person on no account above twice or thrice, unless he become a member.

SECTION XXV.

On visiting from house to house; guarding against those Sins that are so common to Professors, and enforcing practical Religion

Question 1. How can we farther assist those under our care?

Answer By instructing them at their own houses. What unspeakable need is there of this? The world says, "The Methodists are no better than other people." This is not true in the general. But,

- 1 Personal religion, either toward God or man, is too superficial among us. We can but just touch on a few particulars. How little faith is there among us! how little communion with God! how little living in heaven, walking in eternity, deadness to every creature! how much love of the world! desire of pleasure, of ease, of getting money! how little brotherly love! what continual judging one another! what gossiping, evil speaking, tale-bearing! what want of moral honesty! To instance only one particular: Who does as he would be done by, in buying and selling?
- 2 Family religion is wanting in many branches. And what avails public preaching alone, though we could preach like angels? We must, yea, every traveling preacher must instruct the people from house to house. Till this is done, and that in good earnest, the Methodists will be no better.

Our religion is not deep, universal, uniform; but superficial, partial, uneven. It will be so till we spend half as much time in this visiting as we do now in talking uselessly. Can we find a better method of doing this than Mr. Baxter's? If not, let us adopt it without delay. His whole tract, entitled, *Gildas Salvianus*, is well worth a careful perusal. Speaking of this visiting from house to house, he says, (p.351,)

“We shall find many hindrances, both in ourselves and the people.

- 1 In ourselves, there is much dullness and laziness, so that there will be much ado to get us to be faithful in the work.
- 2 We have a base, man-pleasing temper, so that we let men perish, rather than lose their love; we let them go quietly to hell, lest we should offend them.
- 3 Some of us have also a foolish bashfulness. We know not how to begin, and blush to contradict the devil.
- 4 But the greatest hindrance is weakness of faith. Our whole motion is weak, because the spring of it is weak.
- 5 Lastly, we are unskillful in the work. How few know how to deal with men so as to get within them, and suit all our discourse to their several conditions and tempers to choose the fittest subjects, and follow them with a holy mixture of seriousness, terror, love, and meekness!

But undoubtedly this private application is implied, those solemn words of the apostle, “I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead at his appearing, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering.”

O brethren, if we could but set this work on foot in all our societies, and prosecute it zealously, what glory would redound to God! If the common lukewarmness were banished, and every shop and every house busied, in speaking of the word and works of God, surely God would dwell in our habitations, and make us his delight.

And this is absolutely necessary to the welfare of our people, some of whom neither repent nor believe to this day. Look around and see how many of them are still in apparent danger of damnation. And how can you walk, and talk, and be merry with such people, when you know their case? Methinks when you look them in the face, you should break forth into tears, as the prophet did when he looked upon Hazael, and then set on them with the most vehement exhortations. O, for God’s sake, and the sake of poor souls, bestir yourselves, and spare no pains that may conduce to their salvation!

What cause have we to bleed before the Lord this day, that we have so long neglected this good work! If we had but engaged in it sooner, how many more might have been brought to Christ! and how much holier and happier might we have made our societies before now! and why might we not have done it sooner? There are many hindrances: and so there always will be; but the greatest hindrance was in ourselves, in our littleness of faith and love.

But it is objected, 1. This will take up so much time, we shall not have leisure to follow our studies.

We answer,

- 1 Gaining knowledge is a good thing, but saving soul is a better.
- 2 By this very thing you will gain the most excellent knowledge, that of God and eternity.
- 3 You will have time for gaining other knowledge too. Only sleep not more than you need; “and never be idle or triflingly employed.” But,
- 4 If you can do but one, let your studies alone. We ought to throw by all the libraries in the world rather than be guilty of the loss of one soul.

It is objected, 2. “The people will not submit to it.” If some will not, others will; and the success with them will repay all your labor. O let us herein follow the example of St. Paul.

- 1 For our general business, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.
- 2 Our special work, Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock.
- 3 Our doctrine, Repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4 The place, I have taught you publicly, and from house to house.
- 5 The object and manner of teaching, I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears
- 6 His innocence and self-denial herein, I have coveted no man’s silver or gold.
- 7 His patience, Neither count I my life dear unto myself. And, among all other motives, let these be ever before our eyes.
 - 1 The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
 - 2 Grievous wolves shall enter in; yea, of yourselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things.

Write this upon your hearts, and it will do you more good than twenty years’ study. Then you will have no time to spare: you will have work enough. Then likewise no preacher will stay with us who is as salt that has lost its savor; for to such this employment would be mere drudgery and in order to it, you will have need of all the knowledge you can procure, and grace you can attain.

The sum is, Go into every house in course, and teach every one therein, young and old, to be Christians inwardly and outwardly; make every particular plain to their understandings; fix it in their minds; write it on their hearts. In order to this, there must be line upon line, precept upon precept. What patience, what love, what knowledge is requisite for this? we must needs do this, were it only to avoid idleness. Do we not loiter away many hours in every week? each try himself: no idleness is consistent with growth in grace. Nay, without exactness in redeeming time, you cannot retain the grace you received in justification.

Question 2. Why are we not more holy, why do not we live in eternity? walk with God all the day long? Why are we not all devoted to God? breathing the whole spirit of missionaries?

Answer Chiefly because we are enthusiasts; looking for the end without using the means. To touch only upon two or three instances: Who of you rises at four? or even at five, when he does not preach? Do you know the obligation and benefit of fasting or abstinence? How often do you practice it? 2. The neglect of this alone is sufficient to account for our feebleness and faintness of spirit. We are continually grieving the Holy Spirit of God by the habitual neglect of a plain duty. Let us amend from this hour.

Question 3. How shall we guard against Sabbath-breaking, evil speaking, unprofitable conversation, lightness, expensiveness or gayety of apparel, and contracting debts without due care to discharge them?

Answer

- 1 Let us preach expressly on each of these heads.
- 2 Read in every society the sermon on evil speaking.
- 3 Let the leaders closely examine and exhort every person to put away the accursed thing.
- 4 Let the preacher warn every society that none who is guilty herein can remain with us.
- 5 Extirpate buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty laid upon them by government out every society. Let none remain with us who will not totally abstain from this evil in every kind and degree.
- 6 Extirpate bribery, receiving any thing directly or indirectly for voting at any election. Show no respect to persons herein, but expel all that touch the accursed thing.

Question 4. What shall we do to prevent scandal when any of our members fail in business, or contract debts which they are not able to pay?

Answer Let the elder or deacon desire two or three judicious members of the society to inspect the accounts of the supposed delinquents; and if they have behaved dishonestly, or borrowed money without a probability of paying, let them be suspended until their credit is restored.

SECTION XXVI.

On the Instruction of Children

Question What shall we do for the rising generation? Let him who is zealous for God and the souls of men begin now.

Answer

- 1 Where there are ten children whose parents are in society meet them an hour once a week; but where this is impracticable, meet them once in two weeks.
- 2 Procure our instructions for them, and let all who can read and commit them to memory.
- 3 Explain and impress them upon their hearts.
- 4 Talk with them every time you see any at home.
- 5 Pray in earnest for them. Diligently instruct and exhort all parents at their own houses.
- 6 Let the elders, deacons, and preachers take a list of the names of the children; and if any of them be truly awakened, let them be admitted into society.
- 7 Preach expressly on education: "But I have no gift for this." Pray earnestly for the gift, and use means to attain it.

SECTION XXVII.

On building Churches, and on the Order to be observed therein

Question 1. Is any thing advisable in regard to building?

Answer Let all our churches be built plain and decent; but not more expensively than is absolutely unavoidable: otherwise the necessity of raising money will make rich men necessary to us. But if so, we must be dependent on them, yea, and governed by them. And then farewell to the Methodist discipline, if not doctrine too.

N. B.

- 1 That no person shall be eligible as a trustee to any of our churches or colleges, nor act as a steward or leader, that is not in constant church-communion, and a regular leader or member of a class.
- 2 That no person that is a trustee shall be ejected while he is in joint security for money, unless such relief be given him as is demanded, or the person who makes the loan will accept.

Question 2. Is there any exception to the rule, "Let the men and women sit apart?"

Answer There is no exception. Let them sit apart in all our churches.

Question 3. But is there not a worse indecency than this, talking in the congregation before and after service? How shall this be cured?

Answer Let all the ministers and preachers join as one man, and enlarge on the impropriety of talking before or after service; and strongly exhort those that are concerned to do it no more. In three months, if we are in earnest, this vile practice will be banished out of every Methodist congregation. Let none stop till he has carried his point.

SECTION XXVIII.

On raising a general Fund for the Propagation of the gospel

Question How may we raise a general fund for carrying on the whole work of God?

Answer By a yearly collection, and, if need be, a quarterly one, to be raised by every assistant in every principal, congregation in his circuit. To this end, he may then read and enlarge upon the following hints in every such congregation:

How shall we send laborers into those parts where they are most of all wanted? Many are willing to hear, but not to bear the expense. Nor can it as yet be expected of them stay till the word of God has touched their hearts, and then they will gladly provide for them that preach it. Does it not lie upon us in the meantime to supply their lack of service? to raise a general fund, out of which from time to time that expense may be defrayed? By this means those who willingly offer themselves may travel through every part, whether there are societies or not, and stay wherever there is a call, without being burdensome to any. Thus may the gospel, in the life and power thereof, be spread from sea to sea. Which of you will not rejoice to throw in your mite to promote this glorious work?

Besides this, in carrying on so large a work through the continent, there are calls for money in various ways, and we must frequently be at considerable expense, or the work must be at a full stop. Many, too, are the occasional distresses of our preachers, or their families, which require an immediate supply. Otherwise their hands would hang down, if they were not constrained to depart from the work.

"The money contributed will be brought to the ensuing conference.

"Men and brethren, help! Was there ever a call like this since you first heard the gospel sound? Help to relieve your companions in the kingdom of Jesus, who are pressed above measure. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Help to send forth able, willing laborers into your Lord's harvest so shall ye be assistant in saving souls from death, and hiding a multitude of sins. Help to propagate the gospel of your salvation to the remotest corners of the earth, till the knowledge of our Lord shall cover the land as the waters cover the sea. So shall it appear to ourselves and all men that we are indeed one body, united

by one spirit; so shall the baptized heathens be yet again constrained to say, 'See how these Christians love one another.'

SECTION XXIX.

Of the Method of raising a Fund for the superannuated Preachers, and the Widows and Orphans of Preachers

Question 1. How can we provide for superannuated preachers, and the widows and orphans of preachers?

Answer

- 1 Let every preacher contribute two dollars yearly at the conference.
- 2 Let every one when first admitted as a traveling preacher pay twenty shillings Pennsylvania currency.
- 3 Let the money be lodged in the hands of the presiding elder, or lent to the college; and an account thereof kept by the deacon.

N. B. The application of the money shall rest with the conference.

4. Out of this fund let provision be made, first, for the worn-out preachers, and then for the widows and children of those that are dead.

5. Every worn-out preacher shall receive, if he wants it, not usually more than twenty-four pounds annually; Pennsylvania currency.

6. Every widow of a preacher shall receive yearly if she wants it, during her widowhood, twenty pounds.

7. Every child of a preacher shall receive once for all, if he wants it, twenty pounds.

8. But none shall be entitled to any thing from this fund till he has paid fifty shillings.

9. Nor any who neglect paying his subscription for three years together, unless he be sent by the conference out of these United States.

10. Let every assistant, as far as possible, bring to the conference the contribution of every preacher left behind in his circuit.

SECTION XXXI.

On the Printing of Books, and the Application of the Profits arising therefrom

As it has been frequently recommended by the preachers and people that such books as are wanted be printed in this country, we therefore propose,

- 1 That the advice of the conference shall be desired concerning any valuable impression, and their consent be obtained before any steps be taken for the printing thereof.

- 2 That the profits of the books, after all the necessary expenses are defrayed, shall be applied, according to the discretion of the conference, toward the college, the preachers' fund, the deficiencies of preachers' salaries, the distant missions, or the debts of our churches.

SECTION XXXII.

On bringing to Trial, finding guilty, reprovng, suspending, and excluding disorderly Persons from Society and Church Privileges

Question How shall a suspected member be brought to trial?

Answer Before the society of which he is a member, or a select number of them, in the presence of a bishop, elder, deacon, or preacher, in the following manner: —

Let the accused and accuser be brought face to face: if this cannot be done, let the next best evidence be procured. If the accused person be found guilty and the crime be such as is expressly forbidden by the word of God, sufficient to exclude a person from the kingdom of grace and glory, and to make him a subject of wrath and hell, let him be expelled. If he evade a trial by absenting himself after sufficient notice given him, and the circumstances of the accusation be strong and presumptive, let him be esteemed as guilty, and accordingly excluded. And without evident marks and fruits of repentance, such offenders shall be solemnly disowned before the church. Witnesses from without shall not be rejected, if a majority believe them to be honest men.

But in cases of neglect of duties of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging sinful tempers or words, disobedience to the order and discipline of the church, — First, let private reproof be given by a leader or preacher; if there be an acknowledgment of the fault and proper humiliation, the person may remain on trial. On a second offense, a preacher may take one or two faithful friends. On a third failure, if the transgression be increased or continued, let it be brought before the society, or a select number; if there be no sign of humiliation, and the church is dishonored, the offender must be cut off. If there be a murmur or complaint that justice is not done, the person shall be allowed an appeal to the quarterly meeting, and have his case reconsidered before a bishop, presiding elder, or deacon, with the preachers, stewards, and leaders who may be present. After such forms of trial and expulsion, such persons as are thus excommunicated shall have no privileges of society and sacrament in our church, without contrition, confession, and proper trial.

N. B. From this time forward, no person shall be owned as a member of our church without six months' trial.

SECTION XXXIII.

On the Manner by which immoral ministers and Preachers shall be brought to Trial, found guilty, reprov'd, and suspended in the Intervals of Conference.

Question 1. What shall be done when an elder, deacon, or preacher is under the report of being guilty of some capital crime, expressly forbidden in the word of God as an unchristian practice, sufficient to exclude a person from the kingdom of grace and glory, and to make him a subject of wrath and hell?

Answer Let the presiding elder call as many ministers to, the trial as he shall think fit, at least three, and if possible bring the accused and accuser face to face; if the person is clearly convicted, he shall be suspended from official services in the church, and not be allowed the privileges of a member. But if the accused be a presiding elder, the preachers must call in the presiding elder of the neighboring district, who is required to attend, and act as judge. If the persons cannot be brought face to face, but the supposed delinquent flees from trial, it shall be received as a presumptive proof of guilt; and out of the mouth of two or three witnesses he shall be condemned. Nevertheless, he may then demand a trial face to face, or he may appeal to the next conference in that district.

Question 2. What shall be done in cases of improper tempers, words, or actions, or a breach of the articles and discipline of the church?

Answer The person so offending shall be reprehended by his bishop, elder, deacon, or preacher that has the charge of the circuit; or if he be a bishop he shall be reprehended by the conference.⁸ Should a second transgression take place, one, two, or three preachers may be called in if not cured then, he shall be tried at the quarterly meeting by the elder and preachers present; if still incurable, he shall be brought before the conference, and if found guilty and impenitent, he shall be expelled from the connection, and his name so returned in the Minutes.

N. B. Any preacher suspended, at a quarterly meeting, from preaching shall not resume that employment again but by the order of the conference. But it is to be observed that a preacher shall be tried by a deacon, a deacon by an elder, an elder by a presiding elder, and a presiding elder by the presiding elder of a neighboring district.

SECTION XXXIV.

On the Qualification and Duty of Stewards

Question 1. What are the qualifications necessary for stewards?

Answer Let them be men of solid piety, that both know and love the Methodist doctrine and discipline; and of good natural and acquired abilities to transact the temporal business.

⁸ For the trial of a bishop, see the 4th question of the 4th section.

Question 2. What is the duty of stewards?

Answer To take an exact account of all the money or other provision made for and received by any traveling of the preacher in the circuit; to make an accurate return of every expenditure of money whether to the preacher, the sick or the poor; to seek the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them; to inform the preachers of any sick or disorderly persons; to tell the preachers what they think wrong in them; to attend the quarterly meetings of their circuit; to give advice, if asked, in planning the circuit; to attend committees for the application of money to churches; to give counsel in matters of arbitration; to provide elements for the Lord's supper; to write circular letters to the societies in the circuit to be more liberal, if need be; as also to let them know the state of the temporalities at the last quarterly meeting; to register the marriages and baptisms, and to be subject to the bishops, the presiding elder of their district, and the elder, deacon, and traveling preachers of their circuit.

Question 3. What number of stewards are necessary in each circuit .

Answer Not less than two, nor more than four.

SECTION XXXV.

The Nature, Design, and general Rules of the United Societies

- 1 Our society is nothing more than “a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”
- 2 That it may the more easily be discerned, whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve peons in every class; one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty,
 - I. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order
 - 1 To inquire how their souls prosper;
 - 2 To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require;
 - 3 To receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.⁹

⁹ This part refers wholly to towns and cities, where the poor are generally numerous, and church expenses considerable.

II. To meet the minister and the stewards of the society once a week; in order

- 1 To inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, or will not be reprov'd.
- 2 To pay to the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.
- 3 There is one only condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, a desire to free from the wrath to come, i.e., a desire to be saved from their sins: but, wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation.

First, By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind; especially that which is most generally practiced such as

- The taking the name of God in vain;
- The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or selling:
- Drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them.
- The buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women, or children, with an intention to enslave them:
- Fighting, quarreling, brawling; brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, the using many words in buying or selling:
- The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty;
- The giving or taking things on usury, i. e., unlawful interest;
- Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers:
- Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us:
- Doing what we know is not for the glory of God: as
- The putting on of gold and costly apparel:
- The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus:

- The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God:
- Softness and needless self-indulgence:
- Laying up treasure upon earth:
- Borrowing without a probability of paying or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

4. It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation:

Secondly, By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible to all men:

- To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison;
- To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine, that “we are not to do good, unless our hearts be free to it.”
- By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, (unless you can be served better elsewhere,) helping each other in business; and so much the more, because the world will love its own, and them only.
- By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.
- By running with patience the race that is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and off-scouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord’s sake.

5. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly, By attending upon all the ordinances of God: such are,

- The public worship of God;
- The ministry of the word, either read or expounded;
- The supper of the Lord;

- Family and private prayer;
- Searching the Scriptures; and
- Fasting or abstinence.

6. These are the general rules of our societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

The following rules concerning slavery, though I cannot find them either in the printed Minutes,¹⁰ or in the Discipline which contains the above sections, Mr. Lee tells us, are the substance of what the conference did in reference to this subject.

“Every member in our society who has slaves in those states where the law admit of freeing them, shall, after notice given him by the preacher, within twelve months (except in Virginia, and there within two years) legally execute and record an instrument, whereby he sets free every slave in his possession; those who are from forty to forty-five immediately, or at farthest at the age of forty-five; those who are between the ages of twenty-five and forty immediately, or within the course of five years; those who are between the ages of twenty and twenty-five immediately, or at farthest, at the age of thirty; those who are under the age of twenty, as soon as they are twenty-five at farthest. And every infant immediately on its birth.

“Every person concerned who will not comply with these rules, shall have liberty quietly to withdraw from our society within twelve months following the notice being given him as aforesaid. Otherwise the assistant shall exclude him in the society.

“No person holding slaves shall in future be admitted into society, or to the Lord’s supper, till he previously comply with these rules concerning slavery. Those who buy or sell slaves, or give them away, unless on purpose to free them, shall be expelled immediately.”

“These rules,” says Mr. Lee, “were short-lived.” They indeed gave such general offense, and were found to be of such difficult execution that at the next conference, which was held about six months after their passage, they were so generally opposed, that we find the following minute respecting their suspension: —

“It is recommended to all our brethren to suspend the execution of the minute on slavery till the deliberations of a future conference; and that an equal share of time be allowed all

¹⁰ Probably the reason why these rules are not found in the printed books is, that the Minutes were not printed, but merely preserved in MS. until 1785, at which time the above rules were suspended.

our members for consideration when the minute shall be put in force.” It is then added in

—
“N. B. We do hold in the deepest abhorrence the practice of slavery, and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means.”

As these rules were modified from time to time, it will not be necessary to take any farther notice of them than simply to say, that though those who framed them “abhorred the practice of slavery,” they could not have considered it such a sin “as to exclude a man from the kingdom of grace and glory,” else they never would, as honest men, have suspended their execution, as they did about six months after they were passed; nor did they, as some have seemed to suppose, insist on immediate and unconditional emancipation: for even the rule itself, had it not been suspended, provided only for a gradual emancipation, at farthest in five years from a certain age, where circumstances forbade it to be done immediately: But finding that even this gradual process could not be carried forward without producing a greater evil than it was designed to remove, the rule itself, mild and forbearing as it was in comparison to measures recently proposed, was suspended at the succeeding conference, in favor of those more wise and prudent means which the church has ever since used, and is now ready to use, for the extirpation of slavery.

But, as before observed, it will not be necessary to notice the several modifications of the rules on slavery from one general conference to another until the present time, as they all partake of a similar character, intended to record the opposition of the church to the system, and to adopt such means to mitigate its evils, and finally, if possible, to do it away, as wisdom and prudence should dictate. As the rule now stands on the Discipline, it will be noticed at the proper time, only remarking here, that the item in the General Rules on slavery has remained unaltered to the present time, and is therefore expressive of the sense of the Methodist Episcopal Church upon this subject without variation.

BOOK III

**FROM THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH IN 1784, TO THE FIRST REGULAR
GENERAL CONFERENCE IN 1792.**

CHAPTER 1

From the beginning of 1785 to the end of 1786.

The important transactions we have detailed in the preceding chapter were found, upon experiment, to exert a beneficial influence upon the interests of true religion. And having closed the session in peace and with great unanimity of sentiment, the preachers went to their respective fields of labor with renewed courage and with great cheerfulness of mind. Mr. Freeborn Garrettson and Mr. James O. Cromwell about the middle of February took their departure for Nova Scotia; and after enduring many perils on the voyage, arrived in safety at their destined sphere of labor.

At the close of the Revolutionary War, some members of the society had emigrated to that province of the British empire; and being in a destitute state as to religious instruction, they had sent an earnest request to Mr. Wesley to be supplied; and Dr. Coke had interested himself much in their behalf. Accordingly these brethren volunteered their services for this work. On their arrival they were cordially received at Halifax, where they landed. Here Mr. Garrettson found a few members of the society, some of whom had come from Europe, and some from the United States: and during his short continuance in this place, he preached several times with great satisfaction.

Some time before the arrival of these missionaries, Mr. William Black had been instrumental in doing much good to the souls of the people by preaching in various places, particularly in New Brunswick and Halifax. Mr. Black gave the right hand of fellowship to Mr. Garrettson, and he entered upon his work in this Country with that zeal by which he had been distinguished in the United States, and many sinners were awakened and converted to God, and several societies formed.

Here, however, as elsewhere, opposers of the pure doctrines of Christ were found, not only among the openly profane, but also among professors of godliness. Mr. Garrettson gives the following account of a people here called Allenites, taking their name from Mr. Allen, who was their principal leader: —

“Some of them,” says Mr. Garrettson, “seem to have the fear of God; but in general they are as deluded a people as I ever saw. Almost all of them preach in public. I was conversing with one who seems to be a principal person among them. She said she believed death would slay more sins for her than were ever destroyed before. ‘As for sin,’ said she, ‘it cannot hurt me: not even adultery, murder, swearing, drunkenness, nor any other sin, can break the union between me and Christ.’ They have passed judgment upon us, that we are neither Christians nor called to preach.

“Thursday I preached at Mr. Woodworth’s to a crowded audience. A little before preaching time, two old Calvinists came into my room to have a conversation with me before preaching. ‘I understand,’ said one of them, ‘that you hold with falling from grace: I heard it, but did

not know how to believe it, and should be glad to know whether you do deny the perseverance of the saints.' I answered, I do not, for my desire is that they should persevere: I do not hold with man's persevering in wickedness, neither do I believe that a man can have grace while he lives in sin. Let us take the Bible, and see what is said there. I read part of the 15th of John, and parts of several chapters in Hebrews, Romans, and Peter. Now, said I, this is the language of many other passages. We have no promise for any but such as do persevere to the end, and we have had many unhappy instances of men running well for a time, and then turning back: read the 18th chapter of Ezekiel. Now what harm can there be in enforcing our Lord's, the prophet's, and the apostles' exhortation? 'Very good,' said he. Why should we do it if there was no danger? and what harm can there be in the doctrine? Suppose you are a Christian, and your neighbor is one also; you believe in the unconditional perseverance of saints; he in the conditional: who, sir, is the safest? if you are right, surely he cannot fall. 'I never,' said he, 'saw so much in it before.' They stayed to hear the sermon, and afterward one said, 'I never heard these men before, but they are better than I thought.'

"Friday morning I set out for Granville. I had not got far before a man came running out. 'Sir,' said he; 'I like part of your doctrine well, but part I do not like.' What part don't you like? 'You say, sir, that a saint may fall.' Will you answer me one question, said I. Do you know that you were ever converted? 'I do,' said he. Pray tell me how matters are at present between God and your soul. 'Why,' said he, 'it is a winter state.' But, said I, are you not living in open sin against God? He paused awhile. I ask, said I, in the fear of God, and desire an answer in truth. 'I confess,' said he, 'I am living in sin.' And yet you do not believe in falling from grace! I believe it because you have fallen. This is what you call a winter state! I call it lying in the arms of the wicked one; and you may talk as you will about your past experience, but I would not give a straw for your chance of heaven, if you die in this state. You are reconciling Christ and Belial together. 'O,' said he, 'I shall be raised up at the last day.' You will, said I; but, unless you repent, it will be to be cast into the lake of fire. He seemed much affected, and left me.

"January 19th, I preached opposite Granville, to a number of serious hearers, and was invited home to dinner by an old gentleman, who, soon after we were seated at table, said, 'I understand you preach perfection.' I do, said I, and have done so for a number of years; and shall do so as long as I find the doctrine in the Bible. 'Why, sir,' said he, 'Paul was not perfect: he complains of a thorn in the side.' The heart is the place for sin, said I, and not the side. He then mentioned several other passages of Scripture which he thought were opposed to holiness of heart, which I explained to him. Pray, said I, let us come to the point at once. Do you believe that an unholy creature can enter into heaven? 'No.' Pray, when is sin to be destroyed? 'At death.' You must then hold with death as being part of a saviour, or with a purgatory after death, or you must come to perfection on this side the grave. He sat amazed, and seemed to give up the argument. We rose from the table. I went to prayer; then went

on my journey, and preached at six o'clock in the court house. When I left the old man, he desired me to make his house my home. I left Fletcher's Checks with him. Shortly after, I received a few lines from him to this effect: — 'I believe you to be a servant of God. I hope the Lord will bless you, and those that sent you here. I want to see you at my house at every opportunity. I thank you for the book.'

Mr. Garrettson, in another place, gives the following summary of their leading absurdities: — "1. They think they can tell whether a person is a Christian at first sight. 2. They say that we are leading people blindfolded to hell. 3. They are, they say, as sure of heaven as if they were already there, for sin cannot hurt them." "I never met with such a people in my life. There are about fifty of them in Liverpool."

Soon after his arrival, Mr. Garrettson received a letter from Mr. Wesley, of which the following is an extract: —

"I am glad brother Cromwell and you have undertaken that labor of love, the visiting Nova Scotia, and doubt not but you act in full concert with the little handful who were almost alone till you came. It will be the wisest way to make all those who desire to join together thoroughly acquainted with the whole Methodist plan, and to accustom them, from the very beginning, to the accurate observance of all our rules. Let none of them rest in being half Christians. Whatever they do, let them do it with their might, and it will be well, as soon as any of them find peace with God, to exhort them to go on to perfection. The more explicitly and strongly you press all believers to aspire after full sanctification as attainable now by simple faith, the more the whole work of God will prosper.

"I do not expect any great matters from the bishop. I doubt his eye is not single, and if it be not, he will do little good to you or any one else. It may be a comfort to you that you have no need of him: you want nothing which he can give.

"It is a noble proposal of brother Marchington; but; doubt it will not take place. You do not know the of the English Methodists. They do not roll in money like many of the American Methodists. It is with the utmost difficulty that we can raise five or six hundred pounds a year to supply our contingent expenses, so that it is entirely impracticable to raise five hundred pounds among them to build houses in America. It is true, they might do much; but it is a sad observation, they that have most money have usually least grace. The peace of God be with all your spirits.

I am your affectionate friend and brother,

"J. Wesley."

As the societies in this province did not long remain connected with the church in the United States, for we find them on the British Minutes for 1787, it is thought most advisable to complete the notice of the work there in this place. It appears from the Life of Mr. Garrettson that he continued his labors in this province, traveling from place to place, and often exposed to many temporal hardships and privations, until April 10th, 1787, when he embarked for

the United States, leaving behind him, as evidences of his fidelity and success in his Master's work, about six hundred members in the societies. While in this country, Mr. Garrettson says, —

“I traversed the mountains and valleys, frequently on foot, with my knapsack on my back, guided by Indian paths in the wilderness, when it was not expedient to take a horse; and I had often to wade through morasses half leg deep in mud and water, frequently satisfying my hunger with a piece of bread and pork from my knapsack, quenching my thirst from a brook, and resting my weary limbs on the leaves of the trees. Thanks be to God! he compensated me for all my toil, for many precious souls were awakened and converted to God.” This extract will show the manner in which the early Methodist preachers, in imitation of their divine Lord, “went about doing good.”

This year, also, Methodism was introduced into the city of Charleston, South Carolina. In the latter part of February, Bishop Asbury, Jesse Lee, and Henry Willis set off on a visit to this place. Mr. Willis preceded the others, and gave out their appointments; and after preaching in sundry places on their way, they arrived in Charleston on Saturday, February 26th, and on Sabbath morning Mr. Lee preached in an old meeting-house belonging to the Baptists, which had been procured for that purpose. While here they lodged with Mr. Edgar Wells, a respectable merchant, who, though a man of the world, courteously entertained the messengers of the Lord. On their arrival he was preparing to attend the theater, but his plans of amusement were abandoned, and the worship of God was set up in his family. The consequence was, that he became awakened to a sense of his sinfulness, and, after a struggle for about ten days, was brought into gospel liberty.

This was the commencement of Methodism in this place; for although Mr. Wesley visited Charleston in 1736, and Mr. Pillmore in 1773, their visits were but transient, and left no permanent impression upon the minds of the people. After preaching a few times, Mr. Lee left the city with a view to labor in other places, but Bishop Asbury remained until the 9th of March, preaching every evening, and sometimes in the morning, to the people, explaining to them “the essential doctrines” of Methodism; and he says, “I loved and pitied the people, and left some under gracious impressions.”

Though it will be anticipating the chronological order of the history a little, I think it best to give the following account, taken chiefly from that furnished by the Rev. James O. (now Bishop) Andrew, for the Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review.

It seems that, on the departure of Bishop Asbury, Mr. Willis was left in charge of the work. Being a man of general intelligence, of deep piety, and of amiable manners, and devoting himself entirely to his work, he made a favorable impression upon many minds, and soon succeeded in forming a small society. Being informed that they could no longer occupy the old house in which they had hitherto convened, and the private house kindly offered them by Mrs. Stoll soon becoming too small to contain the increased number of hearers, they

began to think seriously of building a house of worship, and soon commenced the work. While this was in progress they continued their meetings in an unfinished house which had been offered them by a friend. This house, begun in 1786, and completed in 1787, was situated in Cumberland Street, and has been the spiritual birthplace of many souls. Bishop Asbury visited the place in 1786, and again in 1787, when he met Dr. Coke, who had recently arrived from England. "Here," he says, "we have a spacious house prepared for us; and the congregations are crowded and solemn."

Being thus furnished with a convenient house of worship, and the word and ordinances of the gospel, the work of God prospered more than it had done heretofore. It did not, however, go on without opposition. In addition to what arose from the natural enmity of the human heart when it comes in contact with the pure doctrines and precepts of Christianity, Methodism received a wound in Charleston from one of its professed friends and public advocates. In 1787, the Rev. Beverly Allen was placed in charge; as an elder, of the society in this place. He was a man of great popularity as a preacher, had married into a respectable family, and acquired much influence in the community. This unhappy man fell from his steadfastness, and in his fall inflicted a wound upon the cause from which it did not recover for a long time. This, together with the difficulties which arose from the state of slavery as it existed in all the southern states, made the situation of a Methodist minister extremely unpleasant, especially when it is considered that the mistaken but well-meant zeal of Dr. Coke, in his open opposition to slavery, tended much to irritate the public mind on that subject. The cause, however, gradually gained ground, and was acquiring the public confidence, until the year 1791, when the church was convulsed by the conduct of the Rev. William Hamett, who formed a division, put himself at the head of a party, and fulminated his anathemas at the head of Bishop Asbury and others.

Mr. Hamett, also, unfortunately for the cause against which he arrayed himself, was a man of popular talents and gentlemanly manners, and had acquired considerable influence in the community, and hence the facility with which he accomplished his design. Bishop Asbury, alluding to the secession of Mr. Hamett, says, "He had three grand objections to us, 1. The American preachers and people insulted him. 2. His name was not printed on our minutes. 3. The Nota Bene minute was directed against him." "We are considered by him as seceders from Methodism! because we do not wear gowns and powder, and because we did not pay sufficient respect to Mr. Wesley." This was the pretense; but it is manifest that Mr. Hamett, who had recently arrived from the West Indies, was not willing to submit to the authority of the conference, and to Bishop Asbury.

The minute to which Mr. Asbury alludes, was in these words: — "Mark well! Our brethren and friends are desired to be more cautious how they receive strange preachers, especially to preach; unless their names are in the minutes, or they can show a parchment or certificate from a presiding elder, or some elder in the district they may say they come from." This,

however, instead of being directed against Mr. Hamett, who was a regular preacher from the European connection, was designed to guard the people against those impostors who endeavored to palm themselves upon the public as Methodist preachers. The accusations which Mr. H. preferred against Bishop Asbury were amply refuted; and that apostolic man lived to witness the clouds of reproach thus raised against him dispersed by the bright rays from the sun of truth. Mr. H., however, succeeded in establishing himself at the head of a party, built him a house of worship in the city of Charleston, and his society were distinguished by the name of "Primitive Methodists." Though many of his mistaken followers returned afterward to the church they had left, and some joined other communions, he remained at the head of a small sect until his death, when Trinity Church, as it was called, passed into the hands of the Protestant Episcopalians, and finally it reverted back, by an amicable arrangement between the parties, to the Methodist Episcopal Church, where it remains to the present day. I shall not anticipate farther the order of events, but notice other particulars in their proper place.

Mr. Asbury having been elected and consecrated to the office of general superintendent, entered immediately upon his great work, traveling from place to place, preaching to the people, and making collections for the college, which had been recently commenced.

In mentioning the college, I am reminded of the necessity of giving an account of this institution, as it belongs most properly to this period of our history. Soon after the arrival of Dr. Coke in 1784, he and Mr. Asbury entered into a consultation respecting the expediency of establishing a literary institution for the education of the sons of our preachers and others who might wish to share in its benefits. Bishop Asbury tells us that he desired a school, but as Dr. Coke pleaded for a college, the conference, when the subject was submitted to them, decided in favor of Dr. Coke's plan, and measures were adopted to carry it into effect. As all these things belong to the history of the times, and will show the views by which the projectors of this institution were actuated, I think it proper to give the whole plan, as it was published by the superintendents immediately on the adjournment of the Christmas conference.

"The Plan for erecting a College, intended to advocate religion in America, to be presented to the principal members and friends of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

"The college is built at Abingdon in Maryland, on a healthy spot, enjoying a fine air and very extensive prospect. It is to receive for education and board the sons of the elders and preachers of the Methodist Church, poor orphans, and the sons of the subscribers and of other friends. It will be expected that all our friends who send their children to the college will, if they be able, pay a moderate sum for their education and board: the rest will be taught and boarded, and, if our finances will allow of it, clothed gratis. The institution is also intended for the benefit of our young men who are called to preach, that they may receive a measure of that improvement which is highly expedient as a preparative for public service.

A teacher of the languages, with an assistant, will be provided, as also an English master, to teach with the utmost propriety both to read and speak the English language: nor shall any other branch of literature be omitted which may be thought necessary for any of the students. Above all, especial care shall be taken that due attention be paid to the religion and morals of the children, and to the exclusion of all such as continue of an ungovernable temper. The college will be under the presidentship of the bishops of our Church for the time being; and is to be supported by yearly collections throughout our circuits, and any endowments which our friends may think proper to give and bequeath.

“Three objects of considerable magnitude we have in view in the instituting of this college.

“The first is a provision for the sons of our married ministers and preachers.

“The wisdom and love of God hath now thrust out a large number of laborers into his harvest: men who desire nothing on earth but to promote the glory of God, by saving their own souls and those that hear them. And those to whom they minister spiritual things are willing to minister to them of their temporal things; so that they have food to eat and raiment to put on, and are content therewith.

“A competent provision is likewise made for the wives of married preachers.

“Yet one considerable difficulty lies on those that have boys, when they grow too big to be under their mother’s direction. Having no father to govern and instruct them, they are exposed to a thousand temptations. To remedy this is one motive that induces us to lay before our friends the intent of the college, that these little ones may have all the instruction they are capable of, together with all things necessary for the body.

“In this view our college will become one of the noblest charities that can be conceived. How reasonable is the institution! Is it fit that the children of those who leave wife and all that is dear to save souls from death, should want what is needful either for soul or body? Ought not we to supply what the parent cannot, because of his labors in the gospel? How excellent will be the effect of this institution! The preacher, eased of this weight, can the more cheerfully go on in his labor. And perhaps many of these children may hereafter fill up the place of those that shall rest from their labors.

“The second object we have in view is the education and support of poor orphans; and surely we need not enumerate the many happy consequences arising from such a charity. Innumerable blessings concenter in it; not only the immediate relief of the objects of our charity, but the ability given them, under the providence of God, to provide for themselves through the remainder of their lives.

The last, though not perhaps the least object in view, is the establishment of a seminary for the children of our competent friends, where learning and religion may go hand in hand; where every advantage may be obtained which may promote the prosperity of the present life, without endangering the morals and religion of the children through those temptations

to which they are too much exposed in most of the public schools. This is an object of importance indeed: and here all the tenderest feelings of the parent's heart range on our side. "But the expense of such an undertaking will be very large; and the best means we could think of at our late conference to accomplish our design was, to desire the assistance of all those in every place who wish well to the work of God: who long to see sinners converted to God, and the kingdom of Christ set up in all the earth.

"All who are thus minded, and more especially our own friends who form our congregations, have an opportunity now of showing their love to the gospel. Now promote, as far as in you lies, one of the noblest charities in the world. Now forward, as you are able, one of the most excellent designs that ever was set on foot in this country. Do what you can to comfort the parents who give up their all for you, and to give their children cause to bless you. You will be no poorer for what you do on such an occasion. God is a good paymaster. And you know, in doing this you lend unto the Lord: in due time he shall repay you.

"The students will be instructed in English, Latin, Greek, logic, rhetoric, history, geography, natural philosophy, and astronomy. To these languages and sciences shall be added, when the finances of our college will admit of it, the Hebrew, French, and German languages.

"But our first object shall be, to answer the design of Christian education, by forming the minds of the youth, through divine aid, to wisdom and holiness; by instilling into their tender minds the principles of true religion; speculative, experimental, and practical, and training them in the ancient way, that they may be rational, Scriptural Christians. For this purpose we shall expect and enjoin it, not only on the president and tutors, but also upon our elders, deacons, and preachers, to embrace every opportunity of instructing the students in the great branches of the Christian religion.

"And this is one principal reason why we do not admit students indiscriminately into our college. For we are persuaded that the promiscuous admission of all sorts of youth into a seminary of learning is pregnant with many bad consequences. For are the students likely (suppose they possessed it) to retain much religion in a college where all that offer are admitted, however corrupted already in principle as well as practice? And what wonder, when (as too frequently it happens) the parents themselves have no more religion than their offspring?

"For the same reason we have consented to receive children of seven years of age, as we wish to have the opportunity of 'teaching their young ideas how to shoot,' and gradually forming their minds, though the divine blessing, almost from their infancy, to holiness and heavenly wisdom as well as human learning. And we may add, that we are thoroughly convinced, with the great Milton, (to whose admirable treatise on education we refer you,) that it is highly expedient for every youth to begin and finish his education at the same place: that nothing can be more irrational and absurd than to break this off in the middle, and to begin it again at a different place, and perhaps in a quite different manner. And on this account

we earnestly desire that the parents and others who may be concerned, will maturely consider the last observation, and not send their children to our seminary if they are not to complete their education there, or at least make some considerable proficiency in the languages, and in the arts and sciences.

“It is also our particular desire, that all who shall be educated in our college may be kept at the utmost distance, as from vice in general, so in particular from softness and effeminacy of manners.

“We shall therefore inflexibly insist on their rising early in the morning; and we are convinced by constant observation and experience, that this is of vast importance both to body and mind. It is of admirable use either for preserving a good, or improving a bad constitution. It is of peculiar service in all nervous complaints, both in preventing and in removing them. And by thus strengthening the various organs of the body, it enables the mind to put forth its utmost exertions.

“On the same principle we prohibit play in the strongest terms: and in this we have the two greatest writers on the subject that perhaps any age has produced (Mr. Locke and Mr. Rousseau) of our sentiments for though the latter was essentially mistaken in his religious system, yet his wisdom in other respects, and extensive genius, are indisputably acknowledged. The employments, therefore, which we have chosen for the recreation of the students are such as are of greatest public utility, agriculture and architecture; studies more especially necessary for a new-settled country and of consequence the instructing of our youth in all the practical branches of those important arts will be an effectual method of rendering them more useful to their country. Agreeably to this idea, the greatest statesman that perhaps ever shone in the annals of history, Peter, the Russian emperor, who was deservedly styled the Great, disdained not to stoop to the employment of a ship carpenter. Nor was it rare, during the purest times of the Roman republic, to see the conquerors of nations and deliverers of their country return with all simplicity and cheerfulness to the exercise of the plow. In conformity to this sentiment, one of the completest poetic pieces of antiquity (the Georgic of Virgil is written on the subject of husbandry; by the perusal of which, and submission to the above regulations, the students may delightfully unite the theory and the practice together. We say delightfully, for we do not entertain the most distant thought of turning these employments into drudgery or slavery, but into pleasing recreations for the mind and body.

“In teaching the languages, care shall be taken to read those authors, and those only, who join together the purity, the strength, and the elegance of their several tongues. And the utmost caution shall be used that nothing immodest be found in any of our books.

“But this is not all. We shall take care that our books be not only inoffensive but useful; that they contain as much strong sense, and as much genuine morality as possible. As far, therefore, as is consistent with the foregoing observations, a choice and universal library shall be provided for the use of the students.

“Our annual subscription is intended for the support of the charitable part of the institution. We have in the former part of this address enlarged so fully on the nature and excellency of the charity, that no more need be said. The relieving our traveling ministers and preachers, by educating, boarding, and clothing their sons, is a charity of the most noble and extensive kind, not only toward the immediate subjects of it, but also toward the public in general; enabling those ‘flames of fire,’ who might otherwise be obliged to confine themselves to an exceedingly contracted sphere of action for the support of their families, to carry the savor of the gospel to the remotest corners of these United States.

“The four guineas a year for tuition, we are persuaded, cannot be lowered, if we give the students that finished education which we are determined they shall have. And though our principal object is to instruct them in the doctrines, spirit, and practice of Christianity, yet we trust that our college will in time send forth men that will be blessings to their country in every laudable office and employment of life, thereby uniting the two greatest ornaments of intelligent beings, which are too often separated, deep learning and genuine religion.

“The rules and regulations with which you are here presented, have been weighed and digested in our conference: but we also submit them to your judgment, as we shall be truly thankful for your advice, as well as your prayers for the success of the college, even where the circumstances of things will not render it expedient to you to favor us with your charity. And we shall esteem ourselves happy, if we be favored with any new light, whether from the members of our own Church or of any other, whereby they may be abridged, enlarged, or in any other way improved, that the institution may be as near perfection as possible.

General Rules concerning the College

- 1 A president and two tutors shall be provided for the present.
- 2 The students shall consist of
 - 1 The sons of traveling preachers.
 - 2 The sons of annual subscribers, the children recommended by those annual subscribers who have none of their own, and the sons of members of our society.
 - 3 Orphans. But,
 - 1 The sons of annual subscribers shall have the preference to any others, except those of the traveling preachers.
 - 2 An annual subscriber who has no sons of his own shall have a right to recommend a child; and such child so recommended shall have the preference to any other, except the sons of traveling preachers and annual subscribers.

- 3 As many of the students as possible shall be lodged and boarded in the town of Abingdon, among our pious friends; but those who cannot be so lodged and boarded shall be provided for in the college.
- 4 The price of education shall be four guineas.
- 5 The sons of the traveling preachers shall be boarded, educated, and clothed gratis, except those whose parents, according to the judgment of the conference, are of ability to defray the expense. “6. The orphans shall be boarded, educated, and clothed gratis.
- 6 No traveling preacher shall have the liberty of keeping his son on the foundation any longer than he travels, unless he be superannuated, or disabled by want of health.
- 7 No traveling preacher, till he has been received into full connection, shall have a right to place his son on the foundation of this institution.
- 8 No student shall be received into the college under the age of seven years.

Rules for the Economy of the College and Students

- 1 The students shall rise at five o'clock in the morning, summer and winter, at the ringing of the college bell.
- 2 All the students, whether they lodge in or out of the college, shall assemble together in the college at six o'clock, for public prayer, except in cases of sickness; and on any omission shall be responsible to the president.
- 3 From morning prayer till seven, they shall be allowed to recreate themselves as is hereafter directed.
- 4 At seven they shall breakfast.
- 5 From eight till twelve they are to be closely kept to their respective studies.
- 6 From twelve to three they are to employ themselves in recreation and dining: dinner to be ready at one o'clock.
- 7 From three till six they are again to be kept closely to their studies.
- 8 At six they shall sup.
- 9 At seven there shall be public prayer.

- 10 From evening prayer till bedtime, they shall be allowed recreation.
- 11 They shall be all in bed at nine o'clock, without fail.
- 12 Their recreations shall be gardening, walking, riding, and bathing, without doors; and the carpenter's, joiner's, cabinetmaker's, or turner's business, within doors.
- 13 A large plot of land, of at least three acres, shall be appropriated for a garden, and a person skilled in gardening be appointed to overlook the students when employed in that recreation.
- 14 A convenient bath shall be made for bathing.
- 15 A master, or some proper person by him appointed, shall be always present at the time of bathing. Only one shall bathe at a time; and no one shall remain in the water above a minute.
- 16 No student shall be allowed to bathe in the river.
- 17 A Taberna Lignaria shall be provided on the premises, with all proper instruments and materials, and a skillful person be employed to overlook the students at this recreation.
- 18 The students shall be indulged with nothing which the world calls play. Let this rule be observed with the strictest nicety; for those who play when they are young will play when they are old.
- 19 Each student shall have a bed to himself, whether he boards in or out of the college.
- 20 The students shall lie on mattresses, not on feather beds, because we believe the mattresses to be more healthy.
- 21 The president and tutors shall strictly examine, from time to time, whether our friends who board the students comply with these rules as far as they concern them.
- 22 A skillful physician shall be engaged to attend the student on every emergency, that the parents may be fully assured that proper care shall be taken of the health of their children, without any expense to them.
- 23 The bishops shall examine, by themselves or their delegates, into the progress of all the students in learning, every half year, or oftener if possible.
- 24 The elders, deacons, and preachers, as often as they visit Abingdon, shall examine the students concerning their knowledge of God and religion.
- 25 The students shall be divided into proper classes for that purpose.

- 26 A pupil who has a total incapacity to attain learning, shall, after sufficient trial, be returned to his parents.
- 27 If a student be convicted of any open sin, he shall, for the first offense, be reprov'd in private; for second offense, he shall be reprov'd in public; and for the third offense, he shall be punished at the discretion of the president; if incorrigible, he shall be expelled.
- 28 But if the sin be exceedingly gross, and a bishop see it necessary, he may be expelled for the first, second, or third offense.
- 29 Idleness, or any other fault, may be punished with confinement, according to the discretion of the president.
- 30 A convenient room shall be set apart as a place of confinement.
- 31 The president shall be the judge of all crimes and punishments, in the absence of the bishops.
- 32 But the president shall have no power to expel a student without the advice and consent of three of the trustees, but a bishop shall have that power."

The site selected for the college buildings, which was on a rising ground in the town of Abingdon, about twenty-five miles from Baltimore, is thus described by Dr. Coke: —

The situation delights me more than ever. There is not, I believe, a point of it, from whence the eye has not a view of at least twenty miles; and in some parts the prospect extends even to fifty miles in length. The water part forms one of the most beautiful views in the United States; the Chesapeake Bay in all its grandeur, with a fine navigable river, the Susquehanna, which empties itself into it, lying exposed to view through a great extent of country."

It was on this spot that a noble brick building was erected, one hundred and eight feet in length, and forty in breadth; and the house was conveniently divided for lodging the students, and for recitation rooms, &c. Through the solicitations of Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury, nearly five thousand dollars had been secured by subscriptions and donations, when they commenced building; and before the rooms were entirely finished a school was opened with a few scholars. On the 8th, 9th, and 10th days of December, 1787, the college was opened with religious exercises, and Bishop Asbury preached a sermon on each day, the dedication sermon being delivered on Sabbath, from 2 Kings iv, 40, "O, thou man of God, there is death in the pot." Whether the selection of this text was ominous or not of the fate of the institution, after being in successful operation for about ten years, it was consumed by fire. Bishop Asbury makes the following remarks on being notified of the destruction of the buildings: —

"We have now a second and confirmed account that Cokesbury College is consumed to ashes, a sacrifice of ten thousand pounds in about ten years! The foundation was laid 1785,

and it was born December 7, 1795. Its enemies may rejoice, and its friends need not mourn. Would any man give me ten thousand pounds a year to do and suffer again what I have done for that house, I would not do it.”

It seems to have been the opinion of Bishop Asbury, that this destruction of the college buildings was an indication of divine Providence that it was no part of the duty of the Methodist Episcopal Church to engage in founding and raising up colleges. It appears to us, however, that on the same principle of reasoning, we should refuse to build a church, or a dwelling house, or even to embark in any business, which might be injured by the elements. Job's repeated losses were permitted to try his patience, and this might have been permitted for a similar effect on the church.

But although Bishop Asbury was dispirited in respect to building colleges, Dr. Coke, encouraged by the generosity of a number of wealthy friends in the vicinity of Abingdon, who sympathized with the sufferers, and also felt a deep interest in the cause of education, determined to make another effort. To aid him in his design, a number of friends in the city of Baltimore, after consulting together, immediately subscribed about four thousand five hundred dollars toward erecting a new building on the same premises. Ascertaining, however, that there was a large building in Baltimore which would answer the purpose, they purchased the premises for the sum of about twenty two thousand dollars. The ground and building thus purchased being more than was needed for the college, the brethren in Baltimore determined to erect a new church on a part of the premises. This was accordingly done, and the church and college were fitted up for use, and the college was opened with a fair prospect of success, even more promising than what had appeared in Cokesbury College; but unhappily a similar fate awaited it.

Through the imprudence of a few boys who had been making a bonfire with some shavings in an adjoining house, the flames were communicated to the house in which they were assembled, and thence to the church and college, which were, after ineffectual attempts to extinguish the flames, entirely consumed. Thus were the hopes of the friends of education again blasted by the sudden destruction of these buildings, by which the Methodists lost not less than forty-four thousand dollars, and the cause of learning was abandoned in despair by the Methodist Episcopal Church for a number of years. Other denominations, however, in the city of Baltimore, sympathized with the Methodists in the loss of their church, and offered their churches for them to assemble in until they could repair their own. This generous offer was thankfully accepted, and they occupied these houses until they succeeded in erecting another.

Having thus traced the commencement and termination of this laudable effort to diffuse a knowledge of literature and science among the people, we will now return to notice the progress of the general work. Immediately after the adjournment of the conference in Baltimore, Dr. Coke returned to Europe. The doctor's talents as a preacher, his Christian and

gentlemanly deportment, and the disinterested zeal he had manifested for the welfare of Methodism in these United States, gained for him a great reputation among the people generally, and gave him an influence of a commanding character; and his enjoyments among his brethren would have been unalloyed had he not given offense, particularly to the people of Virginia, by his pointed, and, as he himself afterward acknowledged, imprudent manner of preaching against slavery. He was, however, rescued from the violence of a mob who had assembled for the purpose of wreaking their vengeance upon him, by the timely and resolute interference of a Christian magistrate and a military officer, and Dr. Coke was permitted to pursue his way unmolested.

It seems that heretofore there had been held only one regular conference in a year; for though some of the preachers had assembled in separate places for the dispatch of their local affairs, the regular conference was considered one and indivisible as to all matters of a general character; but as the work enlarged, new circuits formed, and additional laborers entered the field, and these scattered over such a large surface of country, it became inconvenient for all the preachers to assemble together in one place; hence this year there were held three conferences; one at Green Hills, in North Carolina, April 20th; another at Mr. Mason's, Brunswick county, Virginia, May 1st; and another at Baltimore on the 1st day of June. But though the business was transacted in three separate conferences, their doings appeared in the minutes as one because nothing, except the stationing the preachers, was considered binding which was done in one conference unless approved by all the rest.

The following seven new circuits were added to the list this year: Georgia, in the state of Georgia; Charleston, Georgetown, and Broad River, in South Carolina; New River, in North Carolina; Lancaster, in Virginia; and St. Mary's, in Maryland. The stations in Nova Scotia, before mentioned, and Antigua, in the West Indies, were also returned on the minutes. There were very considerable revivals of religion this year in the south and north, but the greatest work was on the eastern shore of Maryland, and in some parts of New Jersey; so that the increase of members was three thousand and twelve, and of preachers twenty-one: the whole number of members being eighteen thousand — preachers one hundred and four. The origin of the presiding elder's office may be traced to this year, though those who had charge of several circuits were not so denominated in the minutes until 1789. The office originated in this way: at the organization of the Church in 1784, but twelve out of the whole number of preachers were elected and ordained elders, and hence many of the circuits were destitute of any officer who was authorized to administer the ordinances, as a deacon could only assist at the celebration of the Lord's supper. To remedy this defect, and to supply the people with the ordinances regularly, several circuits were linked together, and put under the charge of an elder, whose duty it was to visit each circuit quarterly, preach to the people, hold love-feasts, and administer the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

As the Church had now become regularly organized, and the several offices provided for as they have continued with but little variation to the present time, perhaps this may be the most suitable place to give a short analysis of the several parts of the entire economy, as provided for in the Discipline, that the reader may have the whole before him at one view.

- 1 There is the society, which includes all the members of the church attached to any particular place.
- 2 The classes, which originally consisted of about twelve persons in each, but unhappily have often increased to from twenty to forty, who meet together weekly for mutual edification.
- 3 The class leader has charge of a class, and it is his duty to see each person in his class once a week, to inquire how their souls prosper, and to receive what they are willing to give for the support of the church and poor.
- 4 The stewards, who are chosen by the quarterly conference, on the nomination of the ruling preacher, have charge of all the money collected for the support of the ministry, the poor, and for sacramental occasions, and disburse it as the Discipline directs.
- 5 The trustees have charge of the church property, to hold it in trust for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church. These are elected by the people, in those states where the laws so provide, in other places as the Discipline directs.
- 6 There are the exhorters, who receive their license from the quarterly-meeting conference, and have the privilege of holding meetings for exhortation and prayer.
- 7 A preacher is one that holds a license, and is authorized to preach, but not to baptize or administer the Lord's supper. He may be either a traveling or local preacher. A local preacher generally follows some secular employment for a livelihood, and preaches on Sabbath and at other times occasionally, without any temporal emolument. A traveling preacher devotes himself entirely to the work of the ministry, and is supported by the people among whom he labors. All these, after being recommended by the class to which each respectively belong, or by a leaders' meeting, receive their license from a quarterly meeting conference, signed by a presiding elder.
- 8 A deacon holds a parchment from a bishop, and is authorized, in addition to discharging the duties of a preacher, to solemnize matrimony, to bury the dead, to baptize, and to assist the elder in administering the Lord's supper. It is his duty also to seek after the sick and poor, and administer to their comfort.

- 9 An elder, besides doing the duties above enumerated, has full authority to administer all the ordinances of God's house. These generally, whenever a sufficient number can be had, have the charge of circuits, and the administration of the several parts of the discipline of the church.
- 10 A presiding elder has charge of several circuits, called collectively a district. It is his duty to visit each circuit once a quarter, to preach, and administer the ordinances, to call together the traveling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards, and leaders of the circuit for a quarterly conference, and in the absence of a bishop, to receive, try, suspend, or expel preachers, as the Discipline directs. He is appointed to his charge by the bishop.
- 11 A bishop is elected by the General Conference, and is amenable to that body for his official and moral conduct. It is his duty to travel through the work at large, to superintend the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church, to preside in the annual and the general conferences, to ordain such as are elected by an annual conference to the office of deacons or elders, and to appoint the preachers to their stations.
- 12 A leaders' meeting is composed of all the class leaders in any one circuit or station, in which the preacher in charge presides. Here the weekly class collections are paid into the hands of the stewards, and inquiry is made into the state of the classes, delinquents reported, and the sick and poor inquired after.
- 13 A quarterly meeting conference is composed of all the traveling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards, and leaders belonging to any particular station or circuit, in which the presiding elder presides, or in his absence the preacher in charge. Here exhorters and local preachers are licensed, and preachers recommended to an annual conference to be received into the traveling ministry; and likewise appeals are heard from any member of the church, who may appeal from the decision of a committee.
- 14 An annual conference is composed of all the traveling preachers, deacons, and elders within a specified district of country. These are executive and judicial bodies, acting under rules prescribed the by the General Conference. Here the characters and conduct of all the traveling preachers within the bounds of the conference are examined yearly; applicants for admission into the traveling ministry, if accounted worthy, are received, continued on trial, or dropped, as the case may be: appeals from local preachers which may be presented, are heard and decided; and those who are eligible to deacon's or elder's orders are elected. An annual conference possesses original jurisdiction over all its members, and may therefore try, acquit, suspend, expel, or locate any of them, as the Discipline in such cases provides. For the specific duties of an annual conference, see Discipline, p.28.

- 15 The General Conference assembles quadrennially, and is composed of a certain number of delegates, elected by the annual conferences. It has power to revise any part of the Discipline, not prohibited by the restrictive regulations, (which will be more particularly noticed hereafter,) to elect the book agents and editors, and the bishops; to hear and determine appeals of preachers from the decisions of annual conferences; to review the acts of those conferences generally; to examine into the general administration of the bishops for the four preceding years; and, if accused, to try, censure, acquit, or condemn a bishop. This is the highest judicatory of the Church.
- 16 That the reader may have a complete view of our entire economy, so far as it was organized at the time of which we now speak, it is necessary to notice one more usage, and that is, the holding of love-feasts. Those who are acquainted with the history of the primitive church, know perfectly well that they had what were called Agape, (Agapa,) or feasts of charity, in which they ate and drank together, in token of their love and fellowship to and with each other, and in which they bound themselves not to betray one another into the hands of their enemies. In imitation of these primitive feasts of charity, Mr. Wesley established his love-feasts, and they have been continued to the present time in the Church. Without pretending that every minutia observed in these social meetings has an exact archetype in those primitive assemblies, it is sufficient that they resemble them in the main particulars.

Here believers only, and those who profess to be seeking redemption in the blood of Christ, are admitted, generally on the presentation of a printed ticket, which is a certificate of membership in the Church. After singing an appropriate hymn, and prayer, a small piece of bread and a little water are taken by each person as a token of Christian fellowship, and then some time, usually about one hour, is spent for each one who chooses to relate his or her experience and enjoyment of divine things. A collection is then made for the benefit of the poor, when the assembly is dismissed, after singing and prayer, by the benediction. These meetings have been found peculiarly profitable to the souls of God's people.

17. There is one other item in the economy of our Church which ought to be mentioned in this connection, and that is the salary of the ministry, and the mode in which it is raised. At the time of which we are now speaking, the allowance of a single traveling preacher was sixty-four dollars per annum, and his traveling expenses, and double that sum to one who was married. Out of this amount he had to furnish himself with clothes, horse, and traveling apparatus, his board being included among his traveling or extra expenses. This was raised by the voluntary contributions of the people in weekly class, and quarterly collections a yearly fifth collection was made in all the congregations, and with the small avails arising from the sale of books, was brought to the annual conference, and appropriated

to make up the deficiencies of those who did not receive their full allowance on the circuits, and for the widows and worn-out preachers.

Having given this outline of our economy, the reader will be able to understand the meaning of such technical phrases as quarterly, annual, and general conference, society and class meeting, love-feasts, exhorter, preacher, deacon, elder, and bishop, whenever they occur, without further explanation.

This year, for the first time, the minutes contained, in connection with the names of those preachers who had died in the work during the preceding year, short sketches of their character. As, however, the insertion of these sketches would swell this history beyond its destined bulk, the most of them will be abridged, reserving however the privilege of extending such as were the most eminent for their labors and success in the work. The following record concerning the deaths of preachers is found in the minutes of this year: —

- 1 Caleb B. Peddicord, a man of sorrows, and like his Master, acquainted with grief; but a man dead to the world, and much devoted to God.
- 2 George Mair, a man of affliction, but of great patience and resignation, and of an excellent understanding.

Samuel Rowe, James Martin, and James Morris, were located; and Le Roy Cole was expelled. Numbers in Society: Members this year, 18,000, last year 14,988; Preachers this year, 104, last year, 83; Increase in Members, 3,612; Increase in Preachers, 21.

1786. There were three conferences held this year; one at Salisbury, in North Carolina, on the 21st of February; another at Jones's chapel in Virginia, on the 18th of April; and the third at Baltimore, on the 8th day of May. Five new circuits were added to the list, namely, Santee and Peedee, in North Carolina, Newark in New Jersey, and Kentucky, in the state of Kentucky.

As this is the first mention of Kentucky in our minutes, and as I have given a sketch of the first settlements and general condition of the thirteen original States, it seems proper to give some account of this, and also of the other new states, in the order in which they were visited by the Methodist ministry. For though Kentucky was not received as a member of the American confederacy [Union] until the year 1792, yet as this [1786] was the year it was first entered by a Methodist preacher, this seems to be the most suitable time and pace to notice these things.

In 1775, Colonel Daniel Boone, one of the most famous of American pioneers, first penetrated into the woods of Kentucky, which was then a part of Virginia. His reports of the fertility of the soil, and of the facilities for forming settlements, soon induced other hardy adventurers from Virginia to join him; and thus a way was opened for the cultivation of this wilderness,

which, after the war of the revolution had closed, was so rapidly settled, that in 1792 it was formed into an independent government, and received as one of the states of the Union.

The character of the first settlers, being principally from Virginia, partook of that chivalry and hospitality for which the Virginians are distinguished, though as to religion and morals much could not be then said in their favor. At the time of which we now speak, there were but few inhabitants, probably not over twenty thousand, in the whole territory, and these were found in scattered groups through the country.

The settlements were first visited by the Baptist preachers; but though they exerted some influence among the people in favor of religion, yet it appears from the history of those times, that their general neglect of the Sabbath, their intermeddling much with politics, and their strong bias for Antinomian doctrines, prevented them from doing the good they otherwise might have done. In 1784, a Presbyterian minister settled at Harrodsburgh, in Mercer county, and in the same year a seceder took charge of a congregation in Lexington.

But, as in many other instances we have mentioned, the pioneers of Methodism in this country were some local preachers, who went there for the purpose of bettering their worldly condition, at the same time carrying their religion with them. The author of *Short Sketches of the Work of God in the Western Country*, from whom much of this account is taken, relates, that about this time (1784) a local preacher by the name of Tucker, while on his way to that country in company with some of his friends and connections, who were removing with him to Kentucky, in descending the Ohio River in a boat, was attacked by some hostile Indians, and the preacher received a mortal wound, when he fell on his knees and died shouting praises to God. Before he fell, however, by his bravery and presence of mind he rescued the boat and his companions, among whom were several women and children, from destruction.

This year Messrs. James Haw and Benjamin Ogden were sent to Kentucky; and though their labors were blessed in this new country to the souls of the people, they both soon after departed from the work, being seduced by James O'Kelly and his party.

At the conference in Virginia a proposal was made for some preachers to volunteer their services for the state of Georgia, and several offered themselves for this new field of labor. Two of those who offered themselves, namely, Thomas Humphries and John Major, were accepted, and they went to their work in the name of the Lord, and were made a blessing to many. They formed a circuit along the settlements on the banks of the Savannah River, around by Little River, including the town of Washington. During the year they formed several societies, containing, upward of four hundred members — so greatly did God bless their labors. Mr. Major continued in the state of Georgia about two years, where he ended his labors and life in great peace.

Mr. Asbury, as the general superintendent, besides attending the conferences, which indeed was but a small part of his labor, traveled extensively through the bounds of the work, exposed

often to many hardships and privations, but everywhere treated by the people of God as a messenger of peace and salvation. We find in his Journal for this year that he traversed the country from New York through the middle states to Virginia, and thence to North and South Carolina, preaching generally every day, and meeting the societies. While in Maryland, he received information that on Talbot circuit not less than five hundred souls had joined the Church, half of whom had professed justifying faith, and more than one hundred of the old professors gave evidence of enjoying "perfect love." Indeed, the work of God abundantly prospered this year in various parts of the country, so that the good effects of the late organization were generally felt and acknowledged, and in no department more than in the energy diffused through all its members by the general superintendency in the hands of such a man as Bishop Asbury. His influence was felt throughout the entire work.

Two preachers had died, namely, —

- 1 Jeremiah Lambert, who had been six years in the work, of whom it is said, that he was "a man of sound judgment good gifts, of genuine piety, and very useful" as a preacher, much esteemed in life and lamented in his death.
- 2 James Thomas, a pious young man, of good gifts, useful and acceptable, blameless in his life, and much resigned in death. James Hinton, Edward Drumgole, William Glendenning, and William Ringold desisted from traveling.

As the case of William Glendenning was somewhat singular, a few particulars respecting him may not be uninteresting. It seems that when a proposal was made for preachers to go to Nova Scotia, he was requested to volunteer in this service, to which, as he himself acknowledges, he objected with improper warmth, and thereby, as he supposed, grieved the Spirit, and soon fell into a state of mental darkness, and finally into an alienation of mind. On his being proposed for the elder's office, he was rejected, as he says, "because I wanted gifts." He then says, "While Mr. Asbury was at prayer, I felt all light of divine mercy, as in a moment, take its flight from me. My soul then sunk into the depths of misery and despair." After this he wandered about from place to place, until, in 1792, he wrote to the conference, requesting to be readmitted into the traveling ministry but his request was not granted, because it was believed that he labored under mental derangement.

The numbers in society this year stood as follows: (white,) 18,791, (colored,) 1,890 — total, 20,681: last year, 18,000 — increase, 2,681. Preachers this year, 117: last year, 104 — increase, 13.

It will be perceived from the above that a considerable number of colored persons had been received into the Church, and were so returned in the minutes of conference. Hence it appears that at an early period of the Methodist ministry in this country, it had turned its attention to this part of the population. Under the active labors of Dr. Coke, missions had already

been established in the West Indies which promised much success, and 1,000 of the above number were in the Island of Antigua. These missions, however, were soon after taken under the care of the British conference, and have ever since been prosecuted by the Wesleyan Methodists with perseverance and success.

CHAPTER 2

From 1787 to 1791 inclusive

Three conferences were held this year; one in Salisbury, in North Carolina, on the 17th of March; another at Rough Creek Church, in Virginia, April 19th; and the third in Baltimore on the first day of May. Ten new circuits were added, namely, one in Georgia, the old circuit being divided, the two new ones being called Burke and Augusta: Cainhoy and Edisto, in South Carolina; Greenbrier, Bath, and Ohio, in Virginia; Clarksburgh, Nollechuckie, and Cumberland; and New Rochelle in New York.

Dr. Coke arrived on the continent just in time to attend the first conference in North Carolina, whence he traveled extensively through different parts of the country, preaching to large congregations, and was very useful in his labors. It seems, however, that when he came to the conference in Baltimore, some dissatisfaction was manifested toward him, because, while in Europe, he had, as was contended, so far transcended his powers as to alter the time and place for the conference to meet after they had been fixed by the conference itself. This, with some other complaints of a trifling character, drew from Dr. Coke, with a view to allay all apprehensions of his American brethren hereafter, the following certificate: —

The Certificate of Dr. Coke to the Conference.

“I do solemnly engage by this instrument that I never will, by virtue of my office, as superintendent of the Methodist Church, during my absence from the United States of America, exercise any government whatever in said Methodist Church during my absence from the United States. And I do also engage, that I will exercise no privilege in the said Church when present in the United States, except that of ordaining according to the regulations and laws already existing or hereafter to be made in said Church, and that of presiding when present in conference, and lastly that of traveling at large. Given under my hand the second day of May in the year 1787.

“Thomas Coke.

“Witnesses: “John Tunnel, “John Hagerty, “Nelson Reed.”

And with a view to guard, as much as possible, against similar infringements of their rights in future, the following question and answer were entered on the minutes: —

Question Who are the superintendents of our Church in these United States?

“**Answers** Thomas Coke (when present in the States) and Francis Asbury.”

These things are recorded because they belong to the history of the times, and show the vigilance with which the conference watched over their rights. They show likewise the Christian spirit by which Dr. Coke was actuated in his intercourse with his American brethren; the respect he entertained for Bishop Asbury, his junior in office, in yielding to him, on account of his more intimate acquaintance with the preachers and people, the power of stationing the preachers; as well as his readiness to conciliate all by a frank acknowledgment

of his error in the assumption of power which did not belong to him — an act which was certainly more meritorious as it involved a greater sacrifice of feeling than that of the conference in passing a decree of oblivion for what had passed. Dr. Coke was, like all other men, too fallible not to err, and too good to persist in an error after being made sensible of it.

At this conference it was proposed that Mr. Freeborn Garrettson be elected and ordained a superintendent for the societies in Nova Scotia and the West Indies. This was done in compliance with the express wishes of Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke, as well as those of many of the preachers in Nova Scotia. To this, however, Mr. Garrettson objected, until he might go and visit the brethren for one year, and then, if there should be a general wish for him to take the oversight of them in the character of a superintendent, he would comply.¹ With this proposition Dr. Coke expressed his satisfaction, and there the business ended; for, on account of some unexplained reason, Mr. Garrettson, contrary to his expectations, was appointed a presiding elder in the peninsula, on the eastern shore of Maryland.

Mr. Wesley also signified his wish to have Mr. Richard Whatcoat ordained a joint superintendent with Bishop Asbury; but to this the conference objected, assigning, among other reasons, that they feared, should he be elected and consecrated, Mr. Wesley would call Bishop Asbury home; which shows the high estimation in which he was held by his brethren. This was the year in which the title of bishop, instead of superintendent, was used in the new edition of the Discipline, and has ever since been in use to designate that highest officer in the Church. Seeing that this change of name, perfectly innocent in itself, has given rise to so much controversy, by the fastidiousness of disaffected individuals, and those who have sought a pretext to impugn the motives of our first bishops and others, it were almost to be wished that it had never been taken. The fact, however, may have its use, as it has been the occasion of furnishing the friends of the Church with arguments in its defense, of which they might otherwise have never availed themselves.

But as many specious objections have been preferred against our Church organization, arising partly from this circumstance, and partly from an opinion which has been expressed by malignant individuals, that fraudulent means were resorted to in order to effect it, I shall here state some of these objections, together with such answers as may be considered necessary to obviate them.

- 1 As to the name itself, it is descriptive, when rightly understood, of the same official work as that of superintendent, the latter being derived from the Latin *super* and *intendere*, to oversee, and the former from the German, *bishop*, and both of the same signification with the Greek *Episcopos*, an overseer. The simple name, therefore, is perfectly harmless.

¹ Mr. Lee assigns other reasons for the nonelection of Mr. Garrettson but the above is taken from Mr. G's own account of the transaction, in which he corrects the mistake of Mr. Lee.

2 It is objected that Mr. Wesley was opposed to the thing, and reprov'd Bishop Asbury for assuming the title of bishop. To the assumption of the title simply, I allow Mr. Wesley was opposed, but not to the thing signified by it; for,

1 He ordained Dr. Coke to this very office; and,

2 He sent him with a prayer-book prepared by himself, and with orders to consecrate Mr. Asbury to this office, with power to ordain others, and exercise functions which appertained not to a simple presbyter.²

3. A surreptitious taking of this title is not, in truth, chargeable upon either Dr. Coke or Bishop Asbury; for though they affixed it to their names in the edition of the Discipline without a formal vote of the conference, in 1786, Mr. Lee says, that at the ensuing conference, when the subject was submitted to them, a majority of them approved of the act, and it was accordingly inserted in the minutes for 1787, in the following words: —

“We have constituted ourselves into an Episcopal Church, under the direction of bishops, elders, deacons, and preachers, according to the form of ordination annexed to our prayer-book, and the regulations laid down in this form of discipline.” Hence we find in the minutes for 1788 this question and answer: —

Question Who are the bishops for our Church in the United States?

“**Answers** Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury.”

Here, therefore, was an open avowal of the whole business in the official document of the Church, which all could read and understand. There was, therefore, neither secrecy, collusion, nor underhandedness of any sort in this transaction.

The following questions and answers show the deep interest felt for the colored population, and for the rising generation: —

Question 17. What directions shall we give for the promotion of the spiritual welfare of the colored people?

Answers We conjure all our ministers and preachers by the love of God, and the salvation of souls, and do require them, by all the authority that is invested in us, to leave nothing undone for the spiritual benefit and salvation of them, within their respective circuits or districts; and for this purpose to embrace every opportunity of inquiring into the state of their souls, and to unite in society those who appear to have a real desire of fleeing from the wrath to come, to meet such in class, and to exercise the whole Methodist discipline among them.

Question 19. Shall any directions be given concerning the register-books?

2 See “Defense of our Fathers,” and “An Original Church of Christ.”

Answers Let register-books be provided by all the societies that the elders and deacons may enter the marriages and baptisms regularly in them; and let every such register book be kept in the hands of the steward or any other proper person of each society respectively. Let one general register-book be also kept in the hands of the general steward of every circuit, in which the contents of all the private register-books in the circuit may be inserted at convenient times.

Question 20. What can we do for the rising generation?

Answers Let the elders, deacons, and helpers class the children of our friends in proper classes, as far as it is practicable, meet them as often as possible, and commit them, during their absence, to the care of proper persons, who may meet them at least weekly; and if any of them be truly awakened, let them be admitted into society.

Hitherto there had been no conference held north of Philadelphia, and, since the commencement of the Revolutionary War, north of Baltimore; but this year we find Bishop Asbury, in pursuance of his grand design of spreading the gospel over these lands, in company with Dr. Coke, coming to New York, where he says "the doctor preached with great energy and acceptance." He then says, "I rode twenty miles on Long Island, to Hempstead harbor, and preached with some liberty in the evening. I am now out of the city, and have time to reflect: my soul returns to its rest, and to its labor for souls, in which I can live more by rule."

This, indeed, seemed to be the element of his soul, to be in prayer, in which he was mighty, and in calling sinners to repentance; and having, as above related, visited this part of the country, he turned his face toward the south, traversing all the middle states, and everywhere sowing the "good seed of the kingdom." In Virginia he passed through the east end of the "Dismal Swamp," and thence into North Carolina, where he says, "I found we had to go twelve miles by water, and send the horses another way. O what a world of swamps, and rivers, and islands, we live in here!"

This year was distinguished by a remarkable revival of religion, particularly in the southern parts of Virginia. As Mr. Lee has given a very particular account of this revival, the reader will be pleased to read it in his own words. It is as follows: —

"There was a remarkable revival of religion in the town of Petersburg, and many of the inhabitants were savingly converted; and the old Christians greatly revived. That town never witnessed before or since such wonderful displays of the presence and love of God in the salvation of immortal souls. Prayer meetings were frequently held both in the town and in the country, and souls were frequently converted at those meetings, even when there was no preacher present; for the prayers and exhortations of the members were greatly owned of the Lord.

"The most remarkable work of all was in Sussex and Brunswick circuits, where the meetings would frequently continue five or six hours together, and sometimes all night.

“At one quarterly meeting held at Mabry’s Chapel in Brunswick circuit, on the 25th and 26th of July, the power of God was among the people in an extraordinary manner: some hundreds were awakened; and it was supposed that above one hundred souls were converted at that meeting, which continued for two days, i. e., on Thursday and Friday. Some thousands of people attended meeting at that place on that occasion.

“The next quarterly meeting was held at Jones’s Chapel, in Sussex county, on Saturday and Sunday, the 27th and 28th of July. This meeting was favored with more of the divine presence than any other that had been known before. The sight of the mourners was enough to penetrate the most careless heart. The divine power was felt among the people before the preachers came together. Many of the young converts from the quarterly meeting that had been held two days before at Mabry’s, had come together, and uniting with other Christians in singing and praying, the heavenly fire began to kindle, and the flame of love and holy zeal was spreading among the people, which caused them to break out in loud praises to God. Some when they met would hang on each other, or embrace each other in their arms, and weep aloud, and praise the Lord with all their might. The sight of those who were thus overwhelmed with the love and presence of God, would cause sinners to weep and tremble before the Lord.

“By the time the preachers came within half a mile of the chapel, they heard the people shouting and praising God. When they came up they found numbers weeping, both in the chapel and in the open air. Some were on the ground crying for mercy, and others in ecstasies of joy.

“The preachers went among the mourners and encouraged them and prayed with them. The private Christians did the same. Some were lying and struggling as if they were in the agonies of death; others lay as if they were dead. Hundreds of the believers were so overcome with the power of God that they fell down, and lay helpless on the floor, or on the ground; and some of them continued in that helpless condition for a considerable time, and were happy in God beyond description. When they came to themselves, it was generally with loud praises to God, and with tears and expressions enough to melt the hardest heart. The oldest saints had never before seen such a time of love, and such displays of the power of God.

“The next day the society met early, in order to receive the Lord’s supper.

“While the society was collected in the house, some of the preachers went into the woods to preach; and while they were preaching, the power of the Lord was felt among the people in such a manner that they roared and screamed so loud that the preacher could not be heard, and he was compelled to stop. Many scores of both white and black people fell to the earth; and some lay in the deepest distress until the evening. Many of the wealthy people, both men and women, were seen lying in the dust, sweating and rolling on the ground, in their fine broadcloths or silks, crying for mercy.

As night drew on the mourners were collected together. and many of them were in the most awful distress, and uttered such doleful lamentations that it was frightful to behold them, and enough to affect the most stubborn-hearted sinner. But many of these were filled with the peace and love of God in a moment, and rising up, would clap their hands and praise God aloud. It was then as pleasing as it had before been awful to behold them.

“Many of these people who were happily converted, left their houses and came to the meeting with great opposition to the work of God; but were struck down in an unexpected manner, and converted in a few hours. So mightily did the Lord work, that a great change was wrought in a little time.

“Soon after this, some of the same preachers who had been at the quarterly meetings mentioned above, held a meeting at Mr. F. Bonner’s, ten miles from Petersburg, where a large concourse of people were assembled; and the Lord wrought wonders among them on that day. As many as fifty persons professed to get converted at that time before the meeting closed. The cries of distressed sinners under conviction, and the shouts of happy Christians, were heard afar off. Some that were careless spectators in the beginning of the meeting were happily converted before the meeting ended, and went home rejoicing in God, knowing that he had forgiven their sins.

“They had another meeting at Jones’ Hole Church, about twelve miles from Petersburg; many people assembled. They began to sing and exhort each other before the preachers came, and the Lord wrought among them, and many were crying for mercy. The preacher began to preach, but it was with difficulty that he could keep the people quiet enough to hear him at all. The old Christians were all alive to God, and the young converts were so happy that they could not well hold their peace, but were ready to break out in loud praises to God. They kept in for a while; but toward the close of the sermon some of them broke out into strains of praise the flame spread immediately through the whole house, and hundreds were deeply affected. Some prayed as if they were going to take the kingdom by violence: others cried for mercy as if they were dropping into eternal misery; and some praised God with all their strength, till they dropped down helpless on the floor.

The poor awakened sinners were wrestling with the Lord for mercy in every direction, some on their knees, others lying in the arms of their friends, and others stretched on the floor not able to stand, and some were convulsed, with every limb as stiff as a stick. In the midst of this work several sleepers of the house broke down at once, which made a very loud noise; and the floor sank down considerably; but the people paid but little or no attention to it, and many of them knew nothing of it, for no one was hurt. On that day many souls were brought into the liberty of God’s children. Sinners were struck with amazement at seeing so many of their relations and neighbors converted, and few of them were left without some good desires to be converted themselves.

“The great revival of religion in 1776, which spread extensively through the south part of Virginia, exceeded any thing of the kind that had ever been known before in that part of the country. But the revival this year far exceeded it.

“It was thought that in the course of that summer there were as many as sixteen hundred souls converted in Sussex circuit; in Brunswick circuit about eighteen hundred; and in Amelia circuit about eight hundred. In these three circuits we had the greatest revival of religion but in many other circuits there was a gracious work, and hundreds were brought to God in the course of that year. To give a full description of that remarkable outpouring of the Spirit would exceed the bounds of this history. I have only given a short sketch of a few meetings. There were many other meetings not much inferior to those I have noticed. But the work was not confined to meetings for preaching; at prayer meetings the work prospered and many souls were born again; and the meetings often continued all night, without intermission. In class meetings the Lord frequently set the mourning souls at liberty. It was common to hear of souls being brought to God while at work in their houses or in their fields. It was often the case that the people in their corn-fields, white people, or black, and sometimes both together, would begin to sing, and being affected would begin to pray, and others would join with them, and they would continue their cries till some of them would find peace to their souls. Some account of this work was published in the newspapers at different times, and by that means spread all through the United States.”

John Robertson and James Foster located this year.

Richard Owings had died. In the notice of his death, it is said that he was “one of the first local preachers on the continent.” Before he entered the traveling ministry, which he did about two years before his death, he labored much in the back settlements; and, being a plain, honest, and good man, was very useful. He died at Leesburgh, Virginia, and no doubt rested from his labors.

The success of this year’s labor may be seen in the following account of the Numbers in the Church.

Whites This Year, 21,949, Last Year, 18,791, Increase, 3,158; Colored This Year, 3,893, Last Year, 1,890, Increase, 1,003; Total This Year, 25,842, Last Year, 20,681, Increase 5,161; Preachers This Year, 133, Last Year, 117, Increase 16. 1788.

This year there were seven conferences, as follows: — Charleston, South Carolina, March the 12th; Georgia, on the 9th of April; in Holstein, on the 19th of May; Amelia county, Virginia, on the 17th of June; in Uniontown, on the 22d of July; in Baltimore, on the 10th of September; in Philadelphia, on the 25th of September.

By the division of some of the old circuits, and the addition of new ones, there were added to the list nineteen this year, making in all eighty-five; but as the names of the circuits were undergoing changes almost every year, and new ones added, it is thought not advisable to swell this history with every new name, noticing those only which were formed in new parts

of the work. Two new circuits were added in North Carolina, called Seleuda and Waxsaws, and one in South Carolina, called Anson; French-Broad, and West River, in the back settlements, among the mountains of Virginia; Buckingham, Gloucester, and Rockingham, below the mountains. In Maryland, Annapolis, Harford, and Cecil were formed; Bristol and Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania; Dutchess, Shoreham, New City, Cambridge, and Lake Champlain, in New York conference.

This year was also distinguished by very extensive revivals of religion, some of the most remarkable of which will be noticed. As may be seen by the preceding chapters, the Lord had raised up a number of zealous young men, who had entered the field of itinerancy with hearts fired and filled with love to God and the souls of men. Several of these were placed under the charge of Mr. Garrettson, who was requested by Bishop Asbury to penetrate the country north of the city of New York, and form as many circuits as he could.

A great portion of this country was entirely destitute of religious instruction, more especially the northern and western parts of New York state, and the state of Vermont. There were, to be sure, some small scattered congregations of Lutherans, and Dutch Reformed, along the banks of the Hudson River, and some Congregationalists and Baptists in Vermont. It is manifest, however, that experimental and practical religion was at a very low ebb; and in most of the places, particularly in the new settlements on the west side of the Hudson River, where not even the forms of it were to be found. The following is Mr. Garrettson's own account of the manner in which he was led in this holy enterprise: —

“I was very uneasy in my mind, being unacquainted with the country, an entire stranger to its inhabitants, there being no Methodist societies farther north than Westchester; but I gave myself to earnest prayer for direction. I knew that the Lord was with me. In the night season, in a dream, it seemed as if the whole country up the North River, as far as Lake Champlain, east and west was open to my view.

“After conference adjourned, I requested the young men to meet me. Light seemed so reflected on my path that I gave them directions where to begin, and which way to form their circuits. I also appointed a time for each quarterly meeting, requested them to take up a collection in every place where they preached, and told them I should go up the North River to the extreme parts of the work, visiting the towns and cities in the way, and on my return, I should visit them all, and hold their quarterly meetings. I had no doubt but that the Lord would do wonders, for the young men were pious, zealous, and laborious.”

This plan, so wisely conceived, was carried into execution, and the result was as anticipated. Many houses and hearts were opened to these men of God; and although they suffered some persecution from those who understood not their character and motives, God wrought by their hands in a wonderful manner, so that in the minutes for the next year upward of six hundred were returned as members of the Church on those circuits.

As an instance of the infatuation under which some persons labored respecting the character and objects of the Methodist preachers in that day, take the following, which is related on the authority of Mr. Garretson: — A gentleman from Vermont, on his way down the country, informed the people that these preachers were spread all over those parts through which he had come, and that some one had circulated a report, which many, it seems, believed, “that the king of England had sent them to disaffect the people toward their own government; and they doubted not but they would be instrumental of producing another war.” Others, however, not quite as sagacious in political science, but better versed, as they thought, in theology, gave it, as their opinion, that these itinerants were a flying army of the false prophets spoken of by our Saviour, who should come in the last days, and deceive, if it were possible, the very elect! And then, again, the settled clergy were alarmed by an apprehension that they would break up their congregations, and thus deprive them of their “livings.” These things, however, moved not those heralds of mercy from their steadfastness, nor turned them aside from their course.

This year Bishop Asbury crossed the Allegheny Mountains; and as it will give the reader a correct perception of the manner in which he performed his duties in those days, and the privations to which he and his companions were often subjected, as well as the reflections of a pious and observant mind, I will give his own account of this journey.

“Thursday 10. We had to cross the Allegheny Mountain again, at a bad passage. Our course lay over mountains and through valleys, and the mud and mire was such as might scarcely be expected in December. We came to an old forsaken habitation in Tygers’ Valley: here our horses grazed about while we boiled our meat: midnight brought us up at Jones’s, after riding forty, or perhaps fifty miles. The old man, our host, was kind enough to wake us up at four o’clock in the morning. We journeyed on through devious lonely wilds, where no food might be found, except what grew in the woods, or was carried with us. We met with two women who were going to see their friends, and to attend the quarterly meeting at Clarksburg. Near midnight we stopped at A____’s, who hissed his dogs at us: but the women were determined to get to quarterly meeting, so we went in. Our supper was tea. Brothers Phoebus and Cook took to the woods; old ____ gave up his bed to the women. I lay along the floor on a few deerskins with the fleas. That night our poor horses got no corn; and the next morning they had to swim across the Monongahela: after a twenty miles’ ride we came to Clarksburg, and man and beast were so outdone that it took us ten hours to accomplish it. I lodged with Col. Jackson. Our meeting was held in a long close room belonging to the Baptists: our use of the house, it seems, gave offense. There attended about seven hundred people, to whom I preached with freedom; and I believe the Lord’s power reached the hearts of some. After administering the sacrament, I was well satisfied to take my leave. We rode thirty miles to Father Haymond’s, after three o’clock, Sunday afternoon, and made it nearly eleven before we came in; about midnight we went to rest, and rose at five o’clock next

morning. My mind has been severely tried under the great fatigue endured both by myself and horse. O, how glad should I be of a plain, clean plank to lie on, as preferable to most of the beds; and where the beds are in a bad state, the floors are worse. The gnats are almost as troublesome here as the mosquitoes in the lowlands of the seaboard. This country will require much work to make it tolerable. The people are, many of them, of the boldest cast of adventurers, and with some the decencies of civilized society are scarcely regarded, two instances of which I myself witnessed. The great landholders who are industrious will soon show the effects of the aristocracy of wealth, by lording it over their poorer neighbors, and by securing to themselves all the offices of profit or honor: on the one hand savage warfare teaches them to be cruel; and on the other the preaching of Antinomians poisons them with error in doctrine: good moralists they are not, and good Christians they cannot be, unless they are better taught.”

What has God wrought in those western wilds since that period! The above is given as a specimen of the labors of that great and good man. His Journal shows that this year, as usual, he penetrated almost every part of the country, old and new — the cities, towns, and villages, not neglecting the remote settlements of the woods; thus setting an example to the younger preachers, and to his successors in office, of the labors of a primitive evangelist. In all the conferences he presided jointly with Dr. Coke, when the latter was present; and then he was away, leading on “God’s sacramental hosts” to the grand work of saving the souls for whom Christ had died.

The eastern and western shores of Maryland were blessed this year with an outpouring of the Spirit, and many were brought to the knowledge of the truth. But the most remarkable revival of religion was in the city of Baltimore; and as this was somewhat peculiar in those days, in some of its characteristics, it may be well to give it a particular notice.

In imitation of a practice adopted with so much success by Mr. Wesley, the preachers in and about Baltimore went into the fields and in the market-house on Howard’s Hill, every Sabbath in the afternoon, after the service in the churches. By this means thousands were brought to hear the word of God, who otherwise, in all probability, would never have been reached by it. Through this instrumentality a number of persons had been awakened and converted before the session of the conference in September; and during the conference many more were brought from darkness to light.

On the afternoon of Sabbath the 14th, Bishop Asbury preached in the church of the Rev. Mr. Otterbein, with whom he always maintained a Christian fellowship; and he remarks, “The Spirit of the Lord came among the people, and sinners cried aloud for mercy. Perhaps not less than twenty souls found the Lord from that time until Tuesday following.” The work thus begun went on most rapidly, and in a short time there was such a noise among the people, particularly those who were smitten with conviction for sin, that many, even of the Christians, looked on with astonishment, having never seen things “on this wise;” while

others, as if frightened at what they saw and heard, fled precipitately from the house, some making their escape through the windows. This strange scene soon drew multitudes to the church, "to see what these things meant," so that not only the house was filled, but many stood without in silent astonishment. In a short time some of those who were crying for mercy fell helpless upon the floor, or swooned away in the arms of their friends. But this scene soon changed. "Their mourning was turned to joy," and they arose "filled with all the fulness of God," and with joyful lips proclaimed his goodness to their souls. This had its happy effects upon the spectators, and the work continued to spread among the people, and several students in Cokesbury College were subjects of the revival. The consequence of this great work was, that about three hundred were added to the Church in the city of Baltimore. As this work commenced at the conference, many of the preachers received a new baptism of the Holy Spirit, and went to their several fields of labor "full of faith and the Holy Ghost," and God gave them many seals to their ministry.

Enoch Matson, Adam Cloud, and Thomas S. Chew were entered on the minutes as having desisted from traveling, but they were in fact expelled for improper conduct. Their names were entered in this way probably from tenderness toward them and their friends.

Caleb Boyer, Samuel Dudley, William Cannan, Joseph Wyatt, Michael Ellis, and Ignatius Pigman were returned as having a partial location on account of their families; but who, nevertheless, were subject to the order of the conference. The following had died since the last conference: —

- 1 Thomas Curtis, of whom it is said that he was of "upright life, successful in his labors, and triumphant in his death." He had been seven years in the ministry.
- 2 John Major, who was an honest, loving man, and who died as he lived, full of faith and the Holy Ghost. He was one of the first missionaries that went to the state of Georgia, and was frequently called, on account of the tenderness of his feelings, "The weeping prophet." He had been ten years in the ministry, and left behind him many witnesses to the blamelessness and usefulness of his life.
- 3 Woolman Hickson. He is said to have been a young man of promising abilities as a preacher, of an upright life and blameless conversation; but after traveling seven years he was taken from his labors by the consumption, to his eternal reward. His last labors were chiefly in the vicinity of New York, and he finally died and was buried in that city.
- 4 Elijah Ellis. An humble, diligent, and useful man, who, after laboring five years in the ministry, chiefly in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, died in peace.

Numbers in the Church: White, This year, 30,809, Last year, 21,949; Increase, 8,860; Colored, This year, 6,545, Last year, 3,893; Increase, 2,652; Total This year, 37,354, Total Last year, 25,842; Increase, 11,512; Preachers, This year, 166, Last year, 133; Increase, 33.

This large increase shows the blessed effects of the revivals before mentioned, and which exerted an extensive influence upon the surrounding population.

1789. In consequence of the extension of the work in almost every direction, for the convenience of the preachers, and that the general superintendent might perform his work with greater facility and energy, there were eleven conferences this year, as follows: — March 9th in Georgia; March 17th in Charleston, South Carolina; April 11th at McKnight's meeting house, on the Yadkin River, North Carolina; April 18th at Petersburg, Virginia; April 28th at Leesburgh, Virginia; May 4th at Baltimore, Maryland; May 9th at Cokesbury, Maryland; May 13th at Chestertown; May 18th at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; May 23d at Trenton, New Jersey; May 28th in the city of New York. These conferences must have been very small, and it is stated that the having so many so near together gave dissatisfaction to many of the preachers, though it is manifestly impolitic for an annual conference to comprehend a very large territory.

The following new circuits had been formed during the past year: — Bush River and Little Peedee, in South Carolina; Pamlico, in North Carolina; Greenville and Bottetourt, in Virginia; Baltimore City was this year separated from the circuit, and for the first time a preacher was stationed in the city; Wilmington and Milford, in Delaware; Burlington, in New Jersey; Newburgh, Columbia, Coeyman's Patent, and Schenectady, in New York; and Stamford, in Connecticut.

At the conference of 1787, in consequence of its having been pleaded by Dr. Coke that the conference was under obligation to receive Mr. Whatcoat for a bishop, because it was the wish of Mr. Wesley, the minute which had been adopted in 1784 declaring that "during the lifetime of the Rev. John Wesley, we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the gospel, ready, in matters of church government, to obey his commands," was so far modified as to leave them at liberty to depart from his advice whenever they might think it incompatible with their rights and privileges as an independent Church. In justification of this proceeding it was said that the minute in question was a voluntary act of their own, and not a formal contract entered into with Mr. Wesley, and therefore without any violation of an agreement, they had a right to act in the premises as they thought proper; and more especially, as Mr. Wesley was in England, three thousand miles distant, he could not judge what was fit and right to be done here as well as those who were on the spot, and had actual knowledge of the state of things. On this account the resolution was rescinded in 1787, and a letter written to Mr. Wesley inviting him to come over and visit his American children, that he might more perfectly understand the state of things here from actual observation.

These proceedings were not agreeable to Mr. Wesley, especially as they seemed to imply an abjuration of his authority, inasmuch as his name was not inserted in the minutes. With a view therefore to remove all unpleasantness from his mind, and to give assurance that they intended no disrespect to him, nor any renunciation of his general authority, the following question and answer were inserted in the minutes for this year: —

“Question Who are the persons that exercise the episcopal office in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Europe and America?

“Answers John Wesley, Thomas Coke, and Francis Asbury, by regular order and succession.”

There appears no little ambiguity in this question and answer. Did they mean to say that these persons exercised a joint superintendency both in Europe and America? Certainly not; for neither Thomas Coke nor Francis Asbury exercised any episcopal powers in Europe. What they meant to say evidently was this, that Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury acted in this country as joint superintendents over the Methodist Episcopal Church, while Mr. Wesley exercised a similar power singly in Europe, and a general superintendence in America. This is farther manifest from the next question and answer, which are in the following words: —

“Question Who have been elected by the unanimous suffrages of the General Conference, to superintend the Methodist connection in America?

“Answers Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury.³

This year was, on several accounts, an important era in these United States. The old federal constitution had been found wanting in those principles which were essential for an efficient government, and was this year superseded by the adoption of that constitution under the operation of which the country has ever since so greatly prospered, and Gen. Washington had been unanimously elected the first president. It was therefore thought advisable by the Methodist conference which sat in the city of New York at the time that the first congress assembled in the same city under the new constitution, for Bishops Coke and Asbury to present a congratulatory address to him as the public organ and head of the government. This was accordingly done. And as the author of a pamphlet quaintly called the “History and Mystery of Methodist Episcopacy,” has seen fit to arraign the authors of this address before the public, and even to impeach their integrity, it is thought to be a duty which we owe to the venerable men who signed the address, as well as to the interests of truth, to set this matter in a fair point of light.

The author above mentioned affirmed that the true date of the address was 1785;⁴ but as it was published under date of May 29, 1789, he inferred that for some sinister purpose,

3 See book iii, chap. ii.

4 How such an affirmation could have been made by any honest and intelligent American appears almost inconceivable, when it is so well known that General Washington was at that time, 1785, a private gentleman,

Bishops Coke and Asbury had altered the date, and thereby practiced a deception upon the public. This subject was fully investigated by the late Bishop Emory in his "Defence of our Fathers," and all the insinuations and false assertions of the above writer fully exposed and refuted. The following letter from the Rev. Thomas Morrell, who has recently gone to his reward, to the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, dated Elizabethtown, N. J., August 26, 1827, will throw much light on this subject: —

"With regard to the information you request concerning the address to General Washington, I can furnish you with every material circumstance respecting it, having acted as a sub-agent in the transaction, and having a distinct recollection of the whole business. The history of it is, That Mr. Asbury, in the New York conference in 1789, offered for the consideration of the conference the following proposal: — Whether it would not be proper for us, as a church, to present a congratulatory address to General Washington, who had been lately inaugurated president of the United States, in which should he embodied our approbation of the constitution, and professing our allegiance to the government. The conference unanimously approved, and warmly recommended the measure; and appointed the two bishops, Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury, to draw up the address. It was finished that day, and read to the conference, who evinced great satisfaction in its recital. Brother Dickens and myself were delegated to wait on the president with a copy of the address, and request him to appoint a day and hour when he would receive the bishops, one of whom was to read it to him, and receive his answer. It was concluded that although Dr. Coke was the senior bishop, yet not being an American citizen, there would be an impropriety in his presenting and reading the address; the duty devolved of course on Bishop Asbury. Mr. Dickens and myself waited on the general; and as I had some personal acquaintance with him, I was desired to present him with the copy, and request his reception of the original by the hands of the bishops. The president appointed the fourth succeeding day, at twelve o'clock, to receive the bishops. They went at the appointed hour, accompanied by Brother Dickens and Thomas Morrell. Mr. Asbury, with great self-possession, read the address in an impressive manner. The president read his reply with fluency and animation. They interchanged their respective addresses; and, after sitting a few minutes, we departed. The address and the answer, in a

living on his farm in Virginia, and was not elected president of the United States until 1789. The fact is, as stated in Mr. Morrell's letter, (which see,) that the address was written at the time it stands dated in the address itself, during the session of the New York conference in June, 1789, and at the very time the congress were assembled, and a few days after Washington had delivered his first inaugural address to the representatives of the nation. How could an address be presented to President Washington when there was no such official personage in existence! The supposition carries such self-evident absurdity on its face, that it is a wonder how malignant ingenuity itself could have ever hazarded its assertion. Its refutation therefore is rendered necessary only from the fact, that such is the state of human society that no absurdity is too glaring to gain some proselytes.

few days, were inserted in the public prints; and some of the ministers and members of the other churches appeared dissatisfied that the Methodists should take the lead. In a few days the other denominations successively followed our example.

“The next week a number of questions were published, in the public papers, concerning Dr. Coke’s signing the address. Who was he? How came he to be a bishop? Who consecrated him? &c., accompanied with several strictures on the impropriety of a British subject signing an address approving of the government of the United States; charging him with duplicity, and that he was an enemy to the independence of America; for they affirmed he had written, during our Revolutionary War, an inflammatory address to the people of Great Britain, condemning, in bitter language, our efforts to obtain our independence and other charges tending to depreciate the doctor’s character, and bringing him into contempt with the people of our country. As I did not believe the assertion of the doctor’s writing the address above mentioned, I applied to a gentleman who was in England at the time, to know the truth of the charge; he assured me the doctor had published no such sentiments in England during the Revolutionary War, or at any other period, or he should have certainly had some knowledge of it. And this was the fact; for the doctor had written no such thing. As there was no other person in New York, at that time, in our connection, who could meet these charges, and satisfactorily answer these queries, I undertook the task, and in my weak manner endeavored to rebut the charges and answer the questions. A second piece appeared, and a second answer was promptly published. No more was written on the subject in New York. The doctor afterward gave me his thanks for defending his character.

“Such are the material circumstances that occurred concerning the address to General Washington, and his reply: which you are at liberty to make use of in any way you think proper, — and if you judge it necessary may put my name to it. Thomas Morrell.”

“I certify that the above is a true extract of an original letter of the Rev. Thomas Morrell, addressed to me, bearing the above date, and now in my possession.

“Ezekiel Cooper. New York, September 7, 1827.”

“To this we add the following copy of a letter from the Rev. Mr. Sparks, of Boston, to whom the papers of General Washington have been intrusted, for the purpose of making such selections for publication as he shall deem proper; in which important work this gentleman is now engaged. And for this polite and prompt reply to our inquiries, we here tender to Mr. Sparks our most respectful thanks.

“Boston, September 1, 1827.

“Dear Sir, — Your favor of the 26th ultimo has been received, and I am happy to be able to furnish you with the information you desire. The “date” of the address presented by Bishops Coke and Asbury to General Washington is May twenty-ninth, 1789. It is proper to inform you, however, that I do not find the original paper on the files, but take the date

as it is recorded in one of the volumes of "Addresses." It is barely possible that there may be a mistake in the record, but not at all probable.

"It is not likely that any address from any quarter was presented to Washington in 1785. I have never seen any of that year. He was then a private man, wholly employed with his farms.

"I am, sir, very respectfully, "Your obedient servant,

"Jared Sparks.

"Mr. J. Emory."

That the reader may have all the information desirable in reference to this subject, I have copied the address itself from the Gazette of the United States for June 6, 1789, a file of which is preserved in the New York City Library.⁵ It is as follows: —

ADDRESS OF THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

"To the President of the United States: —

"Sir, — We, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, humbly beg leave, in the name of our society, collectively, in these United States, to express to you the warm feelings of our hearts, and our sincere congratulations on your appointment to the presidentship of these States. We are conscious, from the signal proofs you have already given, that you are a friend of mankind; and under this established idea, place as full confidence in your wisdom and integrity for the preservation of those civil and religious liberties which have been transmitted to us by the providence of God and the glorious revolution, as we believe ought to be reposed in man.

"We have received the most grateful satisfaction from the humble and entire dependence on the great Governor of the universe which you have repeatedly expressed, acknowledging him the source of every blessing, and particularly of the most excellent constitution of these States, which is at present the admiration of the world, and may in future become its great exemplar for imitation; and hence we enjoy a holy expectation, that you will always prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion, the grand end of our creation and present probationary existence. And we promise you our fervent prayers to the throne of grace, that God Almighty may endue you with all the graces and gifts of his Holy Spirit, that he may enable you to fill up your important station to his glory, the good of his Church, the happiness and prosperity of the United States, and the welfare of mankind.

"Signed in behalf of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

"Thomas Coke,

"Francis Asbury.

"New York, May 29, 1789."

5 There is a trifling error in the date in Dr. Emory's account, as he says it was the 3d of June. The true date of the document, May 29, 1789, it will be perceived, corresponds with the date given to it by Mr. Sparks.

The following is the reply of President Washington: —

To the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

“Gentlemen, — I return to you individually, and through you to your society collectively in the United States, my thanks for the demonstrations of affection, and the expressions of joy offered in their behalf, on my late appointment. It shall be my endeavor to manifest the purity of my inclinations for promoting the happiness of mankind, as well as the sincerity of my desires to contribute whatever may be in my power toward the civil and religious liberties of the American people. In pursuing this line of conduct, I hope, by the assistance of divine Providence, not altogether to disappoint the confidence which you have been pleased to repose in me.

“It always affords me satisfaction when I find a concurrence of sentiment and practice between all conscientious men, in acknowledgments of homage to the great Governor of the universe, and in professions of support to a just civil government. After mentioning that I trust the people of every denomination, who demean themselves as good citizens, will have occasion to be convinced that I shall always strive to prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine vital religion — I must assure you in particular, that I take in the kindest part the promise you make of presenting your prayers at the throne of grace for me, and that I likewise implore the divine benediction on yourselves and your religious community.

“George Washington.”

Though the fact that Dr. Coke signed the above address to Washington exposed him to some keen censure from some of his friends in England, because they contended that it was incompatible with his duty as a subject of the British empire thus to eulogize the American constitution and the president of the republic, yet the act itself originated from the sincerest sentiments of veneration for the excellent Washington; and the spirit which the address breathes is evidence of the most genuine piety and patriotism. And whatever may be said for or against Dr. Coke on account of the double relation he held to the two bodies of Methodists in England and America, no whisper could be breathed against the propriety of Bishop Asbury’s conduct in this affair, as he had become an American citizen, was cordially attached to the constitution and government of his adopted country, was seeking to promote its best interests, and regarded the newly elected president with ardent affection and profound veneration. Nor were the expressions of devotedness to the government and its president less the sentiments of the conference, and the Methodist people generally, than they were of the venerable men who signed it. The high estimation in which Bishop Asbury held Washington may be seen from the following remarks which he made on hearing of the death of that great man. He was then at Charleston, South Carolina, and had just adjourned a conference which had been held in that city, January 1800. He says, —

“Slow moved the northern post on the eve of new year’s day, and brought the distressing information of the death of Washington, who departed this life December 14, 1799.

“Washington, the calm, intrepid chief, the disinterested friend, first father, and temporal saviour of his country under divine protection and direction. A universal cloud sat upon the faces of the citizens of Charleston — the pulpits clothed in black — the bells muffled — the paraded soldiery — the public oration decreed to be delivered on Friday the 14th of this month — a marble statue to be placed in some proper situation, — these were the expressions of sorrow, and these the marks of respect paid by his fellow-citizens to this great man. I am disposed to lose sight of all but Washington. Matchless man! At all times he acknowledged the providence of God, and never was he ashamed of his Redeemer. We believe he died not fearing death. In his will he ordered the manumission of his slaves — a true son of liberty in all points.”

I have made this quotation, the sentiments of which seem to have been the spontaneous effusion of the writer’s heart in respect to this universally beloved and respected man, for the purpose of showing that the above address was not intended as an unmeaning compliment, merely to court the popular favor by a servile fawning at the feet of a great man; but that it contained the genuine feelings of the heart, and was intended as a tribute of gratitude to God for favoring the American people with such a noble monument of his wisdom and goodness in the person of this illustrious chief, and in that admirable constitution which his hands helped to frame, and which he was now called upon, by the unanimous suffrages of a free people, to administer and carry into practical effect.

It was indeed but natural for those who had suffered so many privations through a bloody and protracted war, and had since contended with many sorts of opposition from malignant foes, and not a little low scurrility from the exclusive spirit of sectarian bigotry, to rejoice in beholding the adoption of a constitution which guaranteed to all denominations their rights and privileges equally, and to see this constitution committed to the hands of men who had ever manifested an impartial regard for each religious sect, and for the inalienable rights of all mankind.

As this year was the beginning of Methodism in New England, perhaps it may be proper to give some account of the state of that part of our country, that the reader may duly appreciate the difficulties with which it had to contend.

It has already been seen in the introduction that Congregationalism was the prevalent system of Christianity established in this portion of the country. As the early settlers fled here on account of the persecutions which they endured at home, and built themselves up in a separate community, their religious and civil regulations were interwoven, so that they were made mutually to support each other. Thus churches were built, ministers settled and supported, schools and colleges established according to law; and a tax was laid upon the people, in proportion to their property, to sustain these things in conjunction with their civil institutions. In thus providing by law for their own support, they took care to guard against the introduction of other sects, as far as they consistently could, simply tolerating them in

holding their meetings, while they were abridged of many of their rights. According to these regulations all were born members of the Congregation Church, and, when grown maturity, were obliged to pay their proportion toward its support, unless they lodged a certificate in the office of the town clerk that they had attached themselves to some other society.

But the Ideological creed of the country differed in some important particulars from that of the Methodists. I need barely say that the Congregationalists of New England were Calvinist: of the highest order, and, at that time, excessively rigid in their opposition to Arminian or Methodistical doctrines, professing to esteem them as heretical, and dangerous to the souls of the people. And, moreover, as there were very generally ministers established in every parish — for the whole country was divided into parishes — they considered it an encroachment upon their rights for a stranger to intermeddle with them. This was the general state of things in New England. Professing a system of religion which had been handed down to them from their Puritan fathers, guarded and supported by their laws, and defended too in the pulpit by men in general well educated, they wanted not motives to resist the intrusions of Methodist itinerants, who could boast little from their human learning and science, though they certainly stood high for their piety, and were by no means inferior to their fellows in their knowledge of divine things.

But with all these advantages — and surely they were not few — “pure religion” was not generally pressed upon the people from the pulpit. Among the Baptists, some congregations of whom were found scattered through the country, experimental religion was enforced, and no doubt enjoyed by many. But generally speaking, I believe it may be said that, at the time of which we are now speaking, experimental and practical religion was at a very low ebb throughout the churches of New England and in some portions of the country, particularly in Massachusetts, the Unitarian heresy was beginning to show itself in some of the congregations, more especially in and about the city of Boston. This destructive heresy has since spread itself extensively in Massachusetts, has taken possession of Cambridge College, and infected most of the churches in Boston and its vicinity.

This was the general state of things when the Rev. Jesse Lee entered this field of labor.⁶ It was on the 17th of June, 1789, that he preached the first Methodist sermon ever delivered in the state of Connecticut, in the town of Norwalk. Such was the state of feeling in that country that no house could be procured for preaching, all being afraid to open their houses to the stranger. Mr. Lee, therefore, who was not to be intimidated by such discouragements, went into the street, began to sing, and then to pray; and this being heard by a few, a tolerable congregation soon collected, to whom he preached, no one interrupting him. On the 21st of June he preached for the first time in the city of New Haven. He proceeded in his work

6 [Transcriber Endnote: See also P. Douglass Gorrie’s Sketch of the Life of Jesse Lee among our data files — Livesof.exe, Chapter 11. — DVM]

until he formed a regular circuit, including the towns of Norwalk, Fairfield, Stratford, Milford, Redding, Danbury, and Canaan, with several, intermediate places. The manner of his preaching, without notes, the fervency of his spirit, as well as the doctrines he delivered, so opposite to the Calvinism which they had been accustomed to hear, excited much curiosity and drew multitudes to hear him; and some, he says, were brought to feel the weight of the truths he uttered. But they were by no means mere passive hearers. Priests and people, men, women, and children, from their education and habits of life, were fond of disputation, and often, after the preaching, would enter into controversy with the preacher, and especially upon those points on which he differed from the prevalent doctrines of the day. Their objections, however, were generally founded upon the erroneous representations, drawn by themselves as an inference from what they had heard, that the Methodists held to salvation by the merit of good works. This they inferred from the denial of the doctrine of irresistible grace, unconditional and personal election and reprobation, and not because that dogma had ever been asserted; for no such doctrine had ever been held or promulgated by Mr. Wesley or any of his preachers. Mr. Lee, however, endeavored to avoid, as much as possible, all fruitless controversy, by striving to direct their attention to the more important inquiry, whether they had ever been “born of the Spirit,” and whether, as a consequence, they now enjoyed “peace with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” The silent manner in which these questions were listened to, showed evidently that the disputants were more anxious about “lesser matters,” than they were concerning “the things which accompany salvation.” The first Methodist society which was formed in Connecticut was in Stratford, which was on the 26th day of September, and consisted of only three females; but this was a nucleus around which others gathered after much labor and toil, and which has since become a large and flourishing society. The next class was formed in the town of Redding, consisting of a male and female; the former, Aaron Sandford, became a local preacher, and continues such to this day, having lived to see his children, and many of his grand children, members of the Church, with a large and influential society gathered around him; he has a son and a son-in-law in the ministry, and I believe one grand son.

The first Methodist church ever built in New England was on this (Stratford) circuit, in the town of Weston. It was called, in honor of the first Methodist preacher who penetrated into that part of the country, Lee’s Chapel. It stood until the year 1813, when it was rebuilt; and the writer of this [Nathan Bangs] preached the dedication sermon in the new house, on “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts,” Hag. ii, 9.

In the month of February, 1790, three preachers, Jacob Brush, George Roberts, and Daniel Smith, were sent by Bishop Asbury to the help of Mr. Lee. They met him in Dantown, where he was holding a quarterly meeting in a house of worship not yet finished — which was the second built in the country. The coming of these brethren was a great comfort to Mr. Lee,

and they strengthened each other's hands in the Lord. During the preaching on Sabbath, the power of the Lord was so manifested that many cried aloud for mercy, a thing so unusual in that part of the country that some were very much alarmed, and fled from the house in consternation, and others who were in the gallery jumped out on the ground. In the midst, however, of the confusion occasioned by these movements, those who had an experience of divine things rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

Notwithstanding the exterior respect which was paid to religion in this "land of steady habits," the coming of the Methodist preachers excited no little opposition. They were generally called by the settled clergy, "wolves in sheep's clothing," the "false prophets who should come in the latter day," &c., and hence the people felt themselves at liberty to ridicule and persecute them in a variety of ways. As many in the pulpit harangued their people in opposition to those "itinerating peddlers of a false doctrine," as they were sometimes called in derision, the people caught the spirit, and echoed back upon them the opprobrious epithet, mingling with their jeers such unruly conduct as often disturbed them in their solemn assemblies. Hence they have been known to roll stones into the houses where they were assembled in the time of worship, and otherwise interrupt their devotions. These things, however, disheartened not these messengers of mercy in their work, nor impeded their progress in their endeavors to evangelize the people.

The writer of this [Nathan Bangs] remembers perfectly well, when but a boy, of hearing the remarks which were made by some of the people on returning one evening from hearing a Methodist preacher. The wonder was whence they came! They finally concluded, as they had come up from the south, that they were a set of broken merchants, who, having become poor, and being too lazy to work, had taken to this method of preaching to procure a livelihood. I have mentioned this circumstance to show the ignorance which prevailed among the people generally in respect to the character and objects of those primitive Methodist preachers, and as an apology for the treatment they met with from the thoughtless and the gay. Good impressions, however, were made upon many minds, and Bishop Asbury, speaking of the commencement of his work, says, "New England stretcheth out the hand to our ministry, and I trust shortly will feel its influence. My soul shall praise the Lord."

The revival noticed as having begun last year in Baltimore and in some parts of Maryland, went forward with great rapidity this year; and in Baltimore more particularly, Mr. Lee says it exceeded any thing which had been witnessed before. Such was the power which attended the word preached that some of the greatest revilers of the work were constrained to bow to its influence, and to confess that God was indeed in the midst of his people. The following is his own account of this work: —

"Some, were two, three, or four hours on their knees; others were prostrate on the floor, most earnestly agonizing for mercy, till they could rejoice in God their Saviour! "What power! what awe rested on the people!

“Some, after they went home, could not sleep, but wept and prayed all night. The next day was such a time as cannot be sufficiently described.

“Early in the morning, a preacher was sent for to visit a young woman who was under conviction. He exhorted her to believe in the Lord Jesus, and then sung and prayed with her.

“A considerable number of the members of society were collected to supplicate the throne of grace in her behalf. At last the Lord suddenly shed abroad his love in her heart, so that she lifted up her voice with others in loud praises to God.

“This was only a small part of that day’s work. About ten in the morning, a company of mourners assembled together at a private house, where the work of conversion began. First one, and then another, entered into the liberty of the children of God. The news spread; the people collected till the house and street were filled with a crowd of believers, and a wondering multitude: and this continued without intermission till night. They then repaired to the church, which was presently filled, and they continued there until two o’clock the next morning before they broke up.

“Some who came there quite careless, and indeed making derision of the whole, were converted before they returned. Many hard-hearted opposers were conquered at last, and earnestly sought salvation.

“At the same time the country circuits throughout Maryland seemed to flame with holy love. On the eastern shore there was a powerful work; hundreds in different parts were turning to God.”

Dr. Coke arrived again on the continent this year, and after attending some of the conferences, traveled extensively through different parts of the country, and was made a blessing to many. Speaking of the conference which assembled in North Carolina, Bishop Asbury says, “We opened our conference, and were blessed with peace and union; our brethren from the west met us, and we had weighty matters for consideration before us.”

But the glorious work which was breaking forth in every direction was much aided by the energetic labors of Bishop Asbury, who traversed almost every part of the continent, preaching and setting things in order. This year he followed in the track which had been marked out by Mr. Garrettson the preceding year, up the North River, through Dutchess county, surveying the length and breadth of the land, and in the midst of all his labors and bodily sufferings he exclaims, “My soul is so filled with God, that it appears as if all sense of pain was suspended by the power of faith.” Thence he went south, through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, and witnessed the glorious revival which was going on in Baltimore. Under date of September 8, 1789, he says, —

“I preached in town and at the Point. The last quarterly meeting was a wonder-working time. Fifty or sixty souls were then and there brought to God. People were daily praying to God from house to house; some crying for mercy, others rejoicing in God, and not a few, day after day, joining in society for the benefit of Christian fellowship. Praise the Lord, O

my soul! I spent some time in visiting from house to house, and in begging for the college. The married men and the single men, the married women and single women, I met apart, and was comforted. Many of the children of the Methodists are the happy subjects of this glorious revival. We have more members in Baltimore (town and Point) than in any city or town on the continent besides.”

He did not, however, remain long pent up in the city, for under date of the 28th of this month we find him at Bush Forest Chapel, in the neighborhood of Abingdon, where he makes the following remarks “This was one of the first houses that were built for the Methodists in the state of Maryland, and one of the first societies was formed here. They had been dead for many years; — of late the Lord has visited the neighborhood, and I suppose, from report, fifty souls have been converted to God.”

The work of God also extended in many places within the bounds of the new district formed last year by Mr. Garrettson. Mr. Philip Embury,⁷ who had been instrumental in founding the little society in the city of New York, after the arrival of the regular preachers in that city, moved to Ashgrove, and collected a small society in that place, chiefly of emigrants from Ireland. Before the time of which we now speak, they had made several attempts to obtain the aid of traveling preachers, but did not succeed until 1788, when, in answer to a petition to the conference, Mr. Garrettson sent Mr. Lemuel Green to their help. He brought the society under disciplinary regulations, and likewise extended his labors with good effect into the adjoining settlements. Thus this society at Ashgrove may be considered as the center of Methodism in all that region of country.

Long Island also, in the state of New York, was more particularly provided for this year. We have already seen that Captain Webb visited some towns on this island, as early as 1768,

7 Mr. Embury continued a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, and a diligent laborer in the gospel as a local preacher in the Methodist connection, until the year 1775, when he ended his days in peace in the above region of country; and his remains were buried about seven miles distant from Ashgrove, “in a spot of peculiar beauty in the gorge of two romantic hills, on a small elevation surrounded by a lovely scenery, and in view of two or three handsome cottages.” In 1832, some of his surviving friends, moved by a pious respect to the memory of this humble and devoted servant of God, and with a view to deposit his bones in a burying ground in the midst of his children and friends, had them removed from their former resting place, and, with suitable religious services, in the presence of a large multitude of people who had assembled on the occasion, committed them to the earth in the Methodist burying ground in Ashgrove. Over them is placed a marble tablet, with the following inscription: — *PHILIP EMBURY, The earliest American minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Here found His last earthly resting place. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints, &c.*

The remainder of the epitaph need not be copied here. The widow of Mr. Embury was afterward married to a member of our Church by the name of Lawrence, who settled in Upper Canada, and they were the nucleus of a society in the place where they lived, which has continued to flourish to the present day.

and many sinners were awakened under his powerful appeals to their consciences. The political troubles, however, which arose out of the War of the Revolution, had a most deleterious effect upon the religion and morals of the Long Islanders. The British army had the island in possession for several years, and many were the skirmishes, after the memorable battle upon Brooklyn heights, between the contending forces; and the people were perpetually harassed with the depredations committed upon their property by both of the belligerents. On the return of peace, however, the people began to long for the ordinances of religion, and as early as 1784 Mr. Philip Cox was stationed on Long Island; he found a number who remembered the preaching of Captain Webb. He was succeeded by the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, whose faithful and able ministry was made a blessing to many. Messrs. Thomas Ware, Peter Moriarty, and Robert Cloud followed Mr. Cooper, and their evangelical efforts were crowned with success. This year, 1789, Messrs. William Phoebus and John Lee were stationed here, and Long Island formed a part of the New York district.

Long Island has become somewhat famous as being the birthplace of Elias Hicks, the celebrated Quaker preacher, whose peculiar notions in religion, and his zealous manner of propagating them, have been a means of dividing that peaceable denomination, and, it is to be feared, of poisoning the minds of many with very erroneous views of Christianity. These notions, coming so directly in contact with some of the fundamental principles of Methodism, particularly as respects the deity and atonement of Christ, and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, were no small impediments in the way of those Methodist preachers who first labored here. The Lord of the harvest, however, was with them, and gave them access to the understandings and consciences of the people, so that at this time there were upward of two hundred members in the several societies on Long Island.

That God exercises a particular providence over his people, and grants to them blessings in answer to their prayers, is abundantly attested in the holy Scriptures, as well as by the experience and testimony of his servants, in all ages of his church. Those who affect to question this doctrine if they profess faith in divine revelation, would do well to remember that they thereby impeach the veracity of the divine promises, and render ineffectual even the fervent prayers of the righteous. God has said, "Ask, and be given" He also declares that "his ears are open and attentive to the prayers of the righteous." And will he not fulfil his promise to those who pray in faith? He certainly will — else his promise is vain, and prayer is useless. The following narrative respecting the introduction of Methodism into Southold, Long Island, strikingly illustrates the truth of the above remarks, and evinces that the good hand of the Lord is ever with his people. It is related on the best authority: —

In 1794, a Mrs. Moore, who had been converted by the instrumentality of the Methodists, removed to Southold. Being destitute of a spiritual ministry, she united with two other females of a like spirit with herself every Monday evening in holding a prayer meeting, in which they prayed especially that God would send them a faithful minister. Twice they met at the

house of a Mr. Vail, who, though not a professor of religion, was willing that the meeting should be held in his house, as his wife was one of the three, engaged in this pious work. A circumstance occurring one evening which caused them to omit their social meeting, each one retired to her own house, determined to pour out the desire of their souls to God that the primary object of their prayers, namely, the gift of a faithful preacher, might be granted them. During the exercises of this evening they felt an unusual spirit of prayer; but more particularly Mrs. Moore, who continued in strong prayer until near midnight, when she received an assurance that God had heard them, by the following word being deeply impressed upon her mind: — “I have heard their cry, and am come down to deliver them.” and so strong was the conviction upon her mind that she praised God for what she believed he would most assuredly do.

At this very time, Wilson Lee, one of the early Methodist preachers, was at New London, Connecticut, and had put his trunk on board of a vessel with a view to go to his appointment in New York: Contrary wind prevented his departure on the same night in which these pious females were praying in their separate apartments on Long Island, for God to send them a “shepherd after his own heart,” this man of God, detained by contrary winds in New London, felt an unusual struggle of mind for the salvation of souls, attended with a vivid and powerful impression that it was his duty to cross the Sound and go to Long Island. Powerful, indeed, was this impression, that though he tried to resist it, he at length resolved that if a way opened he would proceed. On going to the wharf next morning, he found, to his surprise, a sloop ready to sail for Southold, and without farther hesitancy he immediately embarked and on landing, in answer to his inquiries, was conducted to the house of Mrs. Moore. On seeing him approach the house, and recognizing him from his appearance for a Methodist preacher, though a total stranger, she ran to the door, and saluted him in the following words: — “Thou blessed of the Lord, come in!” They mutually explained the circumstances above narrated, and rejoiced together, “for the consolation.” A congregation was soon collected, to whom Mr. Lee preached with lively satisfaction. God blessed his labors — a class was formed, and from that, period the Methodists continued, with various degrees of prosperity, in Southold, and gradually spread through the length and breadth of the island. Having thus noticed the progress of the work of religion in different parts of the country, let us return to the doings of the conference. In consequence of the extension of the work on every hand, spreading over such a large territory, there were two difficulties which arose in the way of proceeding in the manner they had done heretofore.

- 1 It was very inconvenient for all the members of the conference to assemble together in one place to transact their business. Hence, as we have already seen, the bishops had appointed several separate conferences for the dispatch of their ordinary affairs.

- 2 But any thing which was done in these separate conferences was not binding, except simply the ordinations and stationing the preachers, unless sanctioned by them all. And as this could rarely be expected, constituted as human nature is, it was plainly seen that there was danger of their falling to pieces, or of having divers administrations. To provide against this evil, and to remedy the inconvenience above mentioned, it was determined this year, as the best thing which could be devised, to have a council, for the reasons and purposes, and with the powers set forth in the following questions and answers: —

Question Whereas the holding of general conferences on this extensive continent would be attended with a variety of difficulties, and many inconveniences to the work of God; and whereas we judge it expedient that a council should be formed of chosen men out of the several districts as representatives of the whole connection, to meet at stated times; in what manner is this council to be formed, what shall be its powers, and what farther regulations shall be made concerning it?

“Answers

1st. Our bishops and presiding elders shall be the members of this council; provided, that the members who form the council be never fewer than nine. And if any unavoidable circumstance prevent the attendance of a presiding elder at the council, he shall have authority to send another elder out of his own district to represent him; but the elder so sent by the absenting presiding elder shall have no seat in the council without the approbation of the bishop, or bishops, and presiding elders present. And if, after the above-mentioned provisions are complied with, any unavoidable circumstance, or any contingencies, reduce the number to less than nine, the bishop shall immediately summon such elders as do not preside, to complete the number.

2dly. These shall have authority to mature every thing they shall judge expedient.

- 1 To preserve the general union:
- 2 To render and preserve the external form of worship similar in all our societies through the continent:
- 3 To preserve the essentials of the Methodist doctrines and discipline pure and uncorrupted:
- 4 To correct all abuses and disorders: and, lastly, they are authorized to mature every thing they may see necessary for the good of the church, and for the promoting and improving our colleges and plan of education.

3dly. Provided nevertheless, that nothing shall be received as the resolution of the council, unless it be assented to unanimously by the council; and nothing so assented to by

the council shall be binding in any district till it has been agreed upon by a majority of the conference which is held for that district.

4thly. The bishops shall have authority to summon the council to meet at such times and places as they shall judge expedient.

5thly. The first council shall be held at Cokesbury, on the first day of next December.” Mr. Asbury gives the following account of the first meeting of the council:—

“Thursday, December 4. Our council was seated, consisting of the following persons, viz.: Richard Ivey, from Georgia; R. Ellis, South Carolina; E. Morris, North Carolina; Phil. Bruce, north district of Virginia; James O’Kelly, south district of Virginia; L. Green, Ohio; Nelson Reid, western shore of Maryland; J. Everett, eastern shore; John Dickens, Pennsylvania; J. O. Cromwell, Jersey; and Freeborn Garrettson, New York; all our business was done in love and unanimity. The concerns of the college were well attended to, as also the printing business. We formed some resolutions relative to economy and union, and others concerning the funds for the relief of our suffering preachers on the frontiers. We rose on the eve of Wednesday following. During our sitting, we had preaching every night; some few souls were stirred up, and others converted. The prudence of some had stilled the noisy ardor of our young people; and it was difficult to rekindle the fire. I collected about \$28 for the poor suffering preachers in the west. We spent one day in speaking our own experiences, and giving an account of the progress and state of the work of God in our several districts; a spirit of union pervaded the whole body; producing blessed effects and fruits.”

This shows the purity of mind by which those were actuated to whom the affairs of the Church were at that time committed. But though the preachers generally voted for the plan when it was submitted to them by the bishops, dissatisfaction soon sprang up in their minds in reference to it, on account of its being dangerous, as they thought, to their liberties. It was contended that as the council was composed of the bishops and presiding elders, and as the latter were appointed by the bishops, and changed at their pleasure, it was virtually concentrating all the authority of the Church in the hands of the bishops, and thus creating an aristocracy of power incompatible with the rights and privileges of the entire body.

There was, moreover, one clause in the laws which were to control them, which went to nullify their proceedings, and frustrate the very design for which the council was constituted. It was in these words “Nothing unanimously assented to by the council shall be binding in any district, till it has been agreed upon by a majority of the conference which is held for that district.” Such a regulation, every one must perceive, tended to a dilution of the body, by introducing dissensions: for it could not be expected that so many independent bodies, acting separately, should entirely agree in many important particulars. Such, accordingly, was the opposition manifested to the organization of this council, that it assembled only twice, and therefore it seems unnecessary to give a detailed account of its proceedings. But though it had but an ephemeral existence, it evinced the necessity more strikingly than ever

of an organization which should concentrate the power of the Church in some body which might exercise it with prudence for the general harmony of ministers and people; and this was afterward provided for in a General Conference, which should meet once in four years, at such time and place as might be agreed upon.

This year I find the first mention made of a book steward. And as the printing and circulating of religious books forms a very important feature in the economy of our Church, this seems the most proper place to give some account of this establishment.

Among the means adopted by Mr. Wesley for the diffusion of gospel truth and holiness, and for guarding his people against erroneous doctrines, was that of printing and circulating books; hence he established a press under his own control. Here his own works, and those he extracted from others, were printed; and they were distributed by his preachers as extensively as possible among the people. Whatever profits might arise from the sale of these books were to be appropriated to charitable purposes, and to assist in spreading the gospel by means of an itinerant ministry. The establishment thus begun by Mr. Wesley, has been carried on by the Wesleyan Methodists in England to this day; and has been one of the most powerful auxiliaries in promoting the cause of Christ by that body of ministers.

In 1778 Mr. Wesley commenced the publication of the *Arminian Magazine*, a periodical filled with various sorts of information, containing a museum of divinity and a great variety of miscellaneous reading. It has been continued, greatly enlarged, since his death to this day, now called the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, making in all sixty large volumes.

In the early history of Methodism in this country, the preachers were supplied with books from England. But this method of procuring supplies became troublesome and expensive, which led to the establishment of a similar agency here, for the supply of the people in useful knowledge. By a reference to the books of the agency, in the handwriting of John Dickens, who was the first book-steward, it appears that the first book printed was "A Kempis." This entry is dated August 17, 1789. The first volume of the *Arminian Magazine* was published the same year, also the *Hymnbook*, *Saints' Rest*, and *Primitive Physic*.

I merely notice this here, intending hereafter to devote a chapter to a complete history of this institution, its objects, and the influence it has exerted on the community.

Robert Ayers and William Patridge desisted from traveling this year.

The following preachers had died: —

- 1 Henry Bingham, a native of Virginia. He had been four years in the ministry, had labored successfully as a pious, humble man, and died in peace.
- 2 William Gill. He was a native of the state of Delaware, and had been in the ministry about twelve years, and stood among the first in the conference, both for his experience and knowledge of divine things. He was therefore an able preacher, and a deeply devoted man of God, inspiring confidence in his wisdom and integrity by all who knew him;

and in his death religion shone most conspicuously by enabling him to die in the triumphs of faith.

- 3 John Cooper, who had traveled fifteen years, and was greatly beloved by all who knew him, as a pious and holy man. He had been the subject of much affliction, but bore it all without murmuring, and finally ended his days in peace.
- 4 James White, a native of Maryland. He had been about eight years in the work of the ministry, was much esteemed as a pious and faithful man of God, successful in his work, and resigned in his death.
- 5 Francis Spry. He had traveled four years only, was a man of a pious life, of sound judgment, a useful preacher, and patient and resigned in his death.

Numbers in the Church: Whites This year, 35,019, Last year, 30,809; Increase, 4,210; Colored This year, 8,243, Last year 6,545; Increase, 1,698; Total This year, 43,262, Last year, 37,354; Increase, 5,908; Preachers This year, 196, Last year, 166; Increase, 30.

1790. The following conferences were held this year: — February 15th, in Charleston, South Carolina; March 2d, in Georgia; April 26th, in Kentucky; May 17th, in Holstein; May 24th, in North Carolina; June 14th, Lane's Church; July 29th, in Uniontown, Pennsylvania; August 26th, in Leesburgh, Virginia; September 6th, in Baltimore, Maryland; September 11th, in Cokesbury, Maryland; September 16th, at Duck Creek; September 22d, in Philadelphia; September 28th, in Burlington, New Jersey; October 4th, in New York.

Twenty new circuits were added to the list, as follows: — Savannah, Savannah Town, and Catawba, in the southern part of the work; Lexington, Limestone, Madison, Russel, Green, and Lincoln, in the western country; Contentney, in the lower part of North Carolina; Surry, in the South of Virginia; Stafford and Kanawha, in the northern part of the state; South River, in Maryland; Bethel and Randolph, in New Jersey; New Haven, Hartford, and Litchfield, in Connecticut; and Boston, in Massachusetts.

We find the following question and answer in the minutes of this year: —

Question What can be done in order to instruct poor children, white and black, to read?

Answers Let us labor, as the heart and soul of one man, to establish Sunday schools in or near the place of public worship. Let persons be appointed by the bishops, elders, deacons, or preachers, to teach, gratis, all that will attend and have a capacity to learn, from six o'clock in the morning till ten, and from two o'clock in the afternoon till six, where it does not interfere with public worship. The council shall compile a proper schoolbook, to teach them learning and piety.

This is the first account we have of Sabbath schools in this country; and they appear to have been established chiefly for the instruction of children, whether white or black, who had

not the advantages of day schools. It was found, however, on experiment, that it was extremely difficult to induce those children to attend the schools, and in a short time the teachers, who had tendered their services gratuitously, became discouraged, and the schools were discontinued.

Such schools had been in successful operation in England for several years, were warmly patronized by Mr. Wesley, his preachers and people, and were exerting a salutary influence on the poorer part of the rising generation. In this country, it seems, the Methodists at that time were alone in their efforts to introduce this mode of instruction among the children and youth of their congregations; and hence, not succeeding according to their wishes, prematurely laid it aside. They scarcely thought, it is presumed, that this practice would thereafter be so generally adopted as it since has been, by Christian denominations, and become such an integral part of religious instruction. May it never be discontinued, until the whole population of our globe shall become imbued with the light and power of Christianity!

This year was also distinguished by several powerful revivals of religion. Speaking of the conference which was held in Charleston, South Carolina, Bishop Asbury says, "I have felt fresh springs of desire in my soul for a revival of religion. O may the work be general;" and then remarks that, after preaching, "extracts from sundry letters from New York and Baltimore were read in the congregation, at which saints and sinners were affected."

After the close of the conference he set off on a journey to Kentucky, which was then a comparative wilderness. In this tour he crossed the Allegheny Mountains, which, in some places, he says, "were rising before him like the roof of a house." "Those who wish," he adds, "to know how rough it is, may tread in our path. What made it worse to me was, that while I was looking to see what had become of my guide, I was carried off with full force against a tree that hung across the road some distance from the ground, and my head received a very great jar, which, however, was lessened by my having on a hat that was strong in the crown." After pushing their way rough the wilderness, often having to swim the creeks with their horses, sleep in log huts, or encamp in the woods, he makes the following entry in his Journal: — "From December 14, 1789, to April 20, 1790, we compute to have traveled two thousand five hundred and seventy-eight miles. Hitherto has the Lord helped. Glory! glory to our God!" And the reader will recollect that neither steamboats nor railroads were in use in those days; but they were forced to wend their way through the new settlements in the best way they could, chiefly on horseback. As to the preachers who traveled this rough and poor country, they had to submit to all manner of hardships, so that Bishop Asbury says of them, "I found the poor preachers indifferently clad, with emaciated bodies, and subject to hard fare; but I hope they are rich in faith."

That the reader may see the difficulties with which these primitive Methodist preachers had to contend, as well as the hardships and privations they endured, the following extracts from Bishop Asbury's Journal are given: —

After crossing the Kentucky River he says, —

“I was strangely outdone for want of sleep, having been greatly deprived of it in my journey through the wilderness, which is like being at sea in some respects, and in others worse. Our way is over mountains, steep hills, deep rivers, and muddy creeks; a thick growth of reeds for miles together, and no inhabitants but wild beasts and savage men. Sometimes, before I was aware, my ideas would be leading me to be looking out ahead for a fence, and I would, without reflection, try to recollect the houses we should have lodged at in the wilderness. I slept about an hour the first night, and about two the last. We ate no regular meal; our bread grew short, and I was very much spent.”

Bishop Asbury stopped at the house of a gentleman whose wife, he says, “a tender, gracious soul, was taken a prisoner by the Indians during the last war, and carried to Detroit.” He then adds, “I saw the graves of the slain — twenty-four in one camp. I learn that they had set no guard, and that they were up late playing at cards. A poor woman of the company had dreamed three times that the Indians had surprised and killed them all: she urged her husband to entreat the people to set a guard, but they only abused him and cursed him for his pains. As the poor woman was relating her last dream the Indians came upon the camp: she and her husband sprang away, one east, the other west, and escaped. He afterward came back, and witnessed the carnage. These poor sinners appeared to be ripe for destruction. I received another account of the death of another wicked wretch who was shot through the heart, although he had vaunted with horrid oaths that no Creek Indian could kill him. These are some of the melancholy accidents to which the country is subject for the present.”

This shows the jeopardy to which those were often exposed who traversed this newly settled country in quest of immortal souls, and the intrepidity displayed in encountering these “perils by land,” by those who first penetrated these western wilds as heralds of peace and good will. In Lexington, Bishop Asbury met the preachers in conference, the business which, he says, they “went through with in great love and harmony.” They had preaching at “noon and night, souls were converted, and the fallen restored. My soul,” he adds, “has been blessed among these people, and I am exceedingly pleased with them. I would not, for the worth of all the place, have been prevented in this visit, having no doubt but that it will be for the good of the present and rising generation. It is true, such exertions of mind and body are trying; but I am supported under it if souls are saved, it is enough.”

At this conference a plan was devised for a district school, and three hundred dollars were subscribed, in land and money for its establishment. The school afterward went into operation, but for want of adequate support was finally discontinued. After visiting some places on the west of the mountains, Bishop Asbury set off on his return to the Atlantic states. The

following is his own account of the manner in which this tedious journey was performed:

—
“Monday 24. We set out on our return through the wilderness with a large and helpless company; we had about fifty people, twenty of whom were armed, and five of whom might have stood fire. To reserve order and harmony, we had articles drawn up for, and signed by our company, and I arranged the people for traveling according to the regulations agreed upon. Some disaffected gentlemen, who would neither sign nor come under discipline, had yet the impudence to murmur when left behind. The first night we lodged some miles beyond the hazelpatch. The next day we discovered signs of Indians, and some thought they heard voices; we therefore thought it best to travel on, and did not encamp until three o'clock, halting on the east side of Cumberland River. We had gnats enough. We had an alarm, but it turned out to be a false alarm. A young gentleman, a Mr. Alexander, behaved exceedingly well; but his tender frame was not adequate to the fatigue to be endured, and he had well nigh fainted on the road to Cumberland Gap. Brother Massie was captain; and finding I had gained authority among the people, I acted somewhat in the capacity of an adjutant and quarter-master among them. At the foot of the mountain the company separated; the greater part went on with me to Powell's River; here we slept on the earth, and next day made the Grassy Valley. Several of the company, who were not Methodists, expressed their high approbation of our conduct, and most affectionately invited us to their houses. The journeys of each day were as follows: Monday, forty-five miles; Tuesday, fifty miles; Wednesday, sixty miles.”

From this time Bishop Asbury traveled very extensively through the several states where Methodist societies had been established, and contributed much by his labors to promote the work of God, which was extending powerfully in many places, and particularly in some parts of New England, under the labors of the Rev. Jesse Lee and his helpers.

This year Methodism was introduced into the city of Boston. It is true, that about eighteen years previous to this time, Mr. Boardman had visited Boston, and formed a small society; but as he was not succeeded by any minister of the same order, the society gradually diminished, and finally became extinct. Mr. Garrettson had also passed through Boston, on his way from Nova Scotia, and preached a few sermons in a private house; but no society had been formed by him. On the arrival of Mr. Lee, no house could be procured for preaching; he therefore went upon the Common, stood upon a table, and began to sing and pray. When he commenced there were only four persons present; but before he had concluded there had collected, as he thought, not less than three thousand. The word preached had an effect upon the minds of a few who attended, so that on the next Sabbath, at the same place, the number of hearers was greatly increased; and a way was thus opened for the establishment of a small society in the town of Boston. It is an evidence, however, of the determined opposition which was felt here to Methodism, that Mr. Lee was in the city for about a week,

using every means in his power to procure a house to preach in, but was denied in every instance in which he made application either publicly or privately, and was finally forced either to abandon the place without preaching at all, or to go on to the Common. Here, therefore, he set up his banner in the name of the Lord, and many have since, though not without much hard toiling and many privations, flocked around it.

While in Boston, Mr. Lee received an invitation from a gentleman in Lynn, about ten miles from Boston, for him to visit that place. This gentleman, a Mr. Benjamin Johnson, had heard Methodist preaching about twenty years before, in one of the southern states. Mr. Lee was, therefore, very cordially received, and he soon found himself among "a people prepared of the Lord" to embrace the pure doctrines of Jesus Christ. After giving an account of a sermon he had delivered at Mr. Lye's, at Wood End, he says, —

"I felt great enlargement of heart, and much of the divine presence, while I was warning the people not to be deceived. The presence of God was in the assembly, and some of the hearers appeared to be greatly lifted up in love and thankfulness. O! that God may continue the serious impressions in their minds, till they are brought to the knowledge of God. I have not met with a company of people for a long time that had so much of the appearance of a Methodist congregation as this."

The word preached in Lynn took such effect that in about two months after Mr. Lee first visited the place, February 20, 1791, a society of thirty members was formed, and by the month of May following upward of seventy had received certificates that they attended Methodist meeting. So rapidly did the work progress, that on the 14th of June following, they began to build a house of worship; and "the people had such a mind to work" that the house was raised on the 21st, and dedicated on the 26th of the same month. This is said to have been the first Methodist church which was built in the state of Massachusetts.

Many other towns in this state were visited by Mr. Lee in the course of this year; in all which, notwithstanding the opposition generally manifested by the settled clergy and many of their congregations, he found access to the people. Salem, Newburyport, Danvers, Marblehead, and Charlestown were severally visited, and regular preaching established; and a foundation was thus laid for Methodism in that land of the "pilgrim fathers."

The circuits also in Connecticut were greatly enlarged, and several new ones added by those enterprising preachers who followed in the track of Mr. Lee. Many amusing and instructive anecdotes might be related respecting the manner in which these preachers were received and treated in this part of the country. As they did not suppose any man could be qualified to preach the gospel without a classical education, almost the first question asked by the ministers with whom they came in contact would be, whether they had a "liberal education." Mr. Lee was a shrewd man, and was seldom at a loss for an answer suited to the occasion. He says, in one place, "The woman of the house asked me a few questions, and in a little time wanted to know if I had a liberal education. I told her I had just education enough to

carry me through the country.” Soon after a similar question was propounded to him by one of the principal men of the town, before he would give his consent for Mr. Lee to preach in the court house, to whom he replied, “I have nothing to boast of; though I have education enough to carry me through the country.” On another occasion, a young lawyer, with a view to puzzle Mr. Lee, addressed him in Latin, to whom he replied in German — a language not understood by either the speaker or his friends, who were anxiously listening to the conversation. “There,” said a gentleman who was in the secret of the lawyer’s intentions, “the preacher has answered you in Hebrew, and therefore he must be a learned man.” This repartee of Mr. Lee silenced the inquisitiveness of the facetious lawyer, and gave the former the decided advantage over his antagonist.

But the most effectual method adopted by the Methodist preachers was, when they came in company with those who were fond of disputations, and this was very general in New England, to urge upon the people the necessity of being soundly converted to God, and of enjoying an evidence of their acceptance in his sight, through faith in the Lord Jesus. And through, their persevering diligence in this good work, God blessed their labors abundantly in various places, so that a foundation was laid by their labors and privations for that extensive spread of evangelical principles, and piety which we have lived to see in that part of our country.

But the most difficult place to plant the tree of Methodism was in the city of Boston. It was a considerable time, as already related, before they could procure even a private house to preach in; and when they succeeded thus far, such was the general prejudice against them that they could not long retain possession of it. At length they succeeded in obtaining the use of a school-house, but this was soon after denied them. They then rented a chamber in the north end of the town, where they continued regularly for a considerable time. A small society had been formed on the 13th of July, 1792, and though few in number, and generally poor, with a view to obviate the difficulties they had to contend with, they undertook to build a house of worship. To aid them in this pious design, money was begged for them on the eastern shore of Maryland, in the state of Delaware, Philadelphia, and in New York. By the aid thus afforded they were encouraged to proceed in their labors; and on the 28th day of August, 1795, the corner stone for the first Methodist church was laid in Boston. It was a wooden building, forty-six feet in length and thirty-six in breadth. At this time there were but forty-two members in the Church in Boston, two of whom were colored persons. After the opening of this house the congregation very considerably increased, especially in the evenings, at which time many, who were ashamed to be seen going to a Methodist meeting by daylight, would assemble to hear the “strange doctrine,” as it was called.

In Salem, on some of his first visits, Mr. Lee was invited by the minister, the Rev. Mr. Hopkins, into his pulpit; but at length he was informed by Mr. Hopkins, that though he could not find any particular fault with his preaching, yet such was the opposition of some of his

people, that he thought not prudent to admit Mr. Lee to his pulpit any more. Mr. Lee then thanked him for his former kindness, and they parted with mutual good will.

Hitherto I have recorded the names of those who were located, expelled, or had died; but as the continuance of these records would swell this history beyond reasonable bounds; and as their names, with a brief sketch of the characters of those who had died in the work, will be found in the minutes of the conferences, it is thought to be inexpedient to insert the names of all such, but only those who may have been most eminently useful in the cause of God.

This year eight received a location, and three had departed this life. One of these last, John Tunnel, was elected to the office of an elder at the Christmas conference in 1784, and was eminently useful as a minister of Christ. He had traveled extensively throughout the United States, was highly esteemed for the depth and uniformity of his piety, his indefatigable labors, and his commanding talents as a preacher. He died in great peace near the Sweet Springs, in Virginia, the Church deeply lamenting loss of such a devoted and useful servant.

Numbers in the Church: Whites This year, 45,949, Last year, 35,019, Increase 10,930; Colored This year, 11,682, Last year, 8,243, Increase, 3,439; Total This year, 57,631, Last year, 43,263, Increase, 14,369; Preachers This year, 227, Last year, 196, Increase, 31.

This was by far the largest, increase which had been realized in any one year, and shows the happy effects of the revivals we have mentioned.

1791. There were thirteen conferences held this year, at the following times and places: — At Charleston, South Carolina, on the 22d of February; in Georgia, on the 16th of February; at Mr. McKnight's, North Carolina, on the 2d of April; at Petersburg, Virginia, on the 20th of April; at Hanover, on the 26th of April; in Alexandria, District of Columbia, on the 2d of May; in Baltimore, on the 6th of May; at Duck Creek, on the 13th of May; in Philadelphia, on the 18th of May; in New York, on the 26th of May; in Connecticut, on the 23d of July; in Uniontown, on the 28th of July; in Albany, on the 23d of August.

Ten new circuits were added to the list, namely, Edisto Island, in South Carolina; Union, in Virginia; Queen Anne's, in Maryland; Northumberland, in Pennsylvania; Otsego and Saratoga, in New York; Stockbridge, in Massachusetts; and Kingston, in Upper Canada. Boston was exchanged for Lynn in the minutes.

As this is the first notice we have of a circuit in Canada, it is considered expedient to give some account of the state of things in that country.

Though Canada was discovered by the English as early as 1497, yet it was first settled by the French in 1608. In 1763, after the capture of Quebec by General Wolfe, the whole country passed into the hands of the English, and so remains to the present day.

As this country was first settled by the French, the Roman Catholic religion chiefly prevailed there, but more particularly in the lower province. After the conquest of the country by the English, the Church of England was established by law, though at the same time the Roman

Catholic Church had all their religious rights and privileges guaranteed to them by an act of the king and parliament of Great Britain. These provisions, however, did not exclude other sects from settling among them, and of enjoying their respective peculiarities, with the exception of solemnizing the rites of matrimony.

But while the great majority of the people of Lower Canada were French Catholics, the upper province was settled principally by Protestant refugees from the United States, disbanded soldiers from the British army, and by English, Scotch, and Irish emigrants but at the time of which we are now speaking, the country was extremely destitute of the word and ordinances of Christianity. For though the English Church had a name to live there, but few of her ministers were found among the people, and even these few were destitute of the requisite qualifications of ministers of the sanctuary. Hence the people generally were living in ignorance of God, alike destitute of the ordinances of religion for themselves, and the means of education for their children.

In this state of things, Upper Canada was visited by William Losee, a member of the New York conference, in the year 1791. He went through the wilderness of the western part of the state of New York, suffering numerous privations and hardships, and crossed the lower part of Lake Ontario to Kingston. In attempting to form a circuit along the banks of the lake and of the bay of Quinte, he found here and there an individual who had heard the Methodist preachers in England or in the United States. By these he was cordially received; and he succeeded in forming a circuit, and establishing a few classes. The next year Darius Dunham was sent to Canada. He and brother Losee extended their labors from the bay of Quinte down the banks of the river St. Lawrence, forming what was called the Oswegotchie circuit; and the next year there were returned on the minutes of conference, as the fruit of their labors, one hundred and sixty-five members of the Church.

From this time the work of God went on gradually in Canada, until it eventuated in one of the most glorious revivals of religion we have on record in these modern days. It will be noticed more particularly in the proper place.

This year, with a view to guard against imposture, the brethren and friends were cautioned, in the minutes of conference, to which Mr. Hamitt took exceptions, and which has been before quoted, against receiving any in the character of Methodist preachers, unless they came recommended by the proper authorities of the Church. Perhaps no people have been more exposed to impositions of this character than the Methodists; by reason of their peculiar organization, and the constant habit, at that time especially not much practiced by other denominations, of itinerating so extensively through the country, and the numerous emigrants from Europe, many of whom, having lost their character at home, sought a shelter from their disgrace in America. Yet there is no necessity of suffering from these impostors, if the people would only examine those who come among them in the character of preachers, and ascertain whether or not they are furnished with proper credentials.

This year was also highly favored with the outpourings of the Spirit of God in many places. In New England especially many doors were opened, and solicitations sent for Methodist preaching, notwithstanding the opposition which was manifested to the peculiarities of Methodism. The doctrines of universal redemption, conditional election and perseverance, and more especially of Christian perfection, were most violently opposed by the "standing order" in this country, and the preachers were frequently called upon to defend these truths against subtle and powerful adversaries. Although they in general endeavored to avoid disputations of this character, they were often reluctantly drawn into them in the midst of the people, or they must abandon to their antagonists what they considered the truths of God. Their doctrines, however, gradually gained upon the understandings and affections of many of the people, and commended themselves to their approbation by the happy effect which they produced in the hearts and lives of such as had embraced them.

Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury traveled extensively through the southern states, and rejoiced together in beholding the prosperity of the work of God in many places. We have already seen that the Council had become unpopular among the preachers, and that they were obliged, after the second year's trial, to abandon it. It seems that, among others who were much opposed to committing the affairs of the Church to so few hands, James O'Kelly was one of the foremost, and that by letters from him Dr. Coke's mind had become influenced against it. Hence Bishop Asbury, with whom the Council was a favorite, remarks, "I found the doctor had much changed his sentiments since his last visit to this continent, and that these impressions still continued. I hope to be enabled to give up for peace' sake, and to please all men for their good to edification." In this spirit of sacrifice he yielded to the general wish for the substitution of a General Conference in the place of the Council.

After traversing the southern and middle states, generally preaching every day, Bishop Asbury, for the first time, visited New England this year; and the following extracts from his Journal will show how he felt on his entrance into this land of the Puritans, and what were his first impressions on beholding the state of things here. Under date of June 4, he says, — "I went on to Redding. Surely God will work powerfully among these people, and save thousands of them." — "This country is very hilly and open, not unlike that about the Peak of Derbyshire. I feel faith to believe that this visit to New England will be blessed to my own soul, and to the souls of others. We are now in Connecticut, and never out of sight of a house, and sometimes we have a view of many churches and steeples, built very neatly of wood." — "There may have been a praying ministry and people here, but I fear they are now spiritually dead, and am persuaded that family and private prayer is very little practiced. Could these people be brought to constant, fervent prayer, the Lord would come down and work wonders among them."

From this place he traveled through various towns, preaching the "gospel of the kingdom" to all who would come and hear, and on the 9th came to the pleasant city of New Haven,

the Athens of New England. His appointment having been published in the newspapers, many came to hear, among whom was the president of Yale College, the Rev. Dr. Stiles, and several other clergymen. He remarks, that though they heard with attention and gravity, yet, after meeting, no one asked him to his house; and though he attended the college at the hour of prayer, no one gave him an invitation to visit the interior of the college buildings. This cold reception, he says, reminded him of the words of Mr. Whitefield to Messrs. Boardman and Pillmore, on their arrival in America: —

“Ah,” said he, “if ye were Calvinists, ye would take the country before ye.” “Should Cokesbury or Baltimore,” he adds, “ever furnish the opportunity, I, in my turn, will requite their behavior by treating them as friends, brethren, and gentlemen. The difficulty I met with in New Haven for lodging, and for a place to hold meeting, made me feel and know the worth of Methodists more than ever.”

From New Haven Bishop Asbury passed on through Middletown to New London, and thence to Providence in Rhode Island where he took sweet counsel with the Rev. Mr. Snow, a pious Congregational minister, then aged about seventy years, who had been brought to the knowledge of the truth by the Rev. Mr. Tenant, “whose memory,” says the bishop, “I revere.” Of the people of Providence he makes the following remarks: —

“They appear to be prudent, active, frugal; cultivating a spirit of good family economy; and they are kind to strangers. They have frequently had revivals of religion. I had faith to believe the Lord would shortly visit them again, and that even we shall have something to do in this town.

From Providence he went on to Boston, where he met with a very cold reception, owing to the want of boldness and energy in the few who professed to be friends. Such were the discouragements thrown in his way in this place that he says, “I have done with Boston until we can obtain a lodging, a house to preach in, and some to join us.” In Lynn he met with a most cordial and welcome reception, and says, which indeed is proved to have been prophetic, “Here we shall make a firm stand, and from this central point, from Lynn, shall the light of Methodism radiate through the state.”

From hence he passed on through Worcester and the intervening towns to Hartford, and from thence to Albany, N. Y., where he arrived on the 20th of July. After a short review of his recent travels in New England, and observations upon the religious state of the people, he says, —

“I am led to think the eastern church will find this saying hold true in regard to the Methodists, ‘I will provoke you to jealousy by a people that were no people; and by a foolish nation will I anger you.’ They have trodden upon the Quakers, the Episcopalians, the Baptist — see now if the Methodists do not work their way.”

I have been thus particular in following the first tour made by Bishop Asbury into New England; that the reader may see with what indefatigable industry this man of God fulfilled

the high and important office he sustained in the Methodist Church, and the influence which his labors exerted in the cause of Christ in that part of our country. His office was no sinecure, but one of increasing toil and sacrifice, and in the exercise of it he gave the most devoted attention to the best interests of mankind; nor were his impressions respecting the state of things in New England, and his anticipations of the success of Methodism among that people, either erroneous or chimerical; for they have since been verified by the course of events. From this land, where Christianity was interwoven with the civil institutions, have shot forth those branches which have since extended even to the far west, and are now flourishing in all the freshness of perennial growth in those new states and territories.

This year was distinguished by the death of that eminent man of God and founder of Methodism, the Rev. John Wesley. Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury were in Virginia when this melancholy news reached them; and the following are the reflections which the latter makes on hearing this mournful event: —

“The solemn news reached our ears that the public papers had announced the death of that dear man of God, John Wesley. He died in his own house in London, in the eighty-eighth year of his age, after preaching the gospel sixty-four years. When we consider his plain and nervous writings; his uncommon talent for sermonizing and journalizing; that he had such a steady flow of animal spirits; so much of the spirit of government in him; knowledge as an observer; his attainments as a scholar; his experience as a Christian; I conclude his equal is not to be found among all the sons he hath brought up; nor his superior among all the sons of Adam he may have left behind. Brother Coke was sunk in spirit, and wished to hasten home immediately. For my part, notwithstanding my long absence from Mr. Wesley, and a few unpleasant expressions in some of the letters the dear old man has written to me, occasioned by the misrepresentations of others, I feel the stroke most sensibly; and I expect I shall never read his Works without reflecting on the loss which the church of God and the world have sustained by his death.”

The death of Mr. Wesley, though from his great age it must have been generally expected by his friends, was an event mournfully felt throughout the Christian church, and more especially through all the ranks of Methodism. His character is now so well known that it is scarcely necessary to add any thing here to what has already been said in the published accounts of this great and good man. As long as pure Christianity shall remain, so long will the name of Wesley be held in grateful remembrance. For among all those who have been raised up in modern days to revive and diffuse abroad the pure principles of the gospel, no one shone so conspicuously, nor exerted such a holy and extensive influence, as did John Wesley. His writings will speak for him, and proclaim him the sound divine, the ripe and finished scholar, the deep and sincere Christian, and a man of the most enlarged philanthropy, so long as pure Christianity shall be held in esteem, while the scribblings of his defamers shall be held in execration by all pious and well-informed Christians. And the

society he was instrumental in raising up and establishing in Great Britain, as well as the Church which was organized under his direction in America, shall remain as monuments of his wisdom in devising and executing plans for the diffusion of gospel truth and holiness, and for the permanent establishment of such associations as be instrumental in transmitting these blessings from generation to generation.

That the Church, in both hemispheres, should mourn the loss of such a man is nothing more than what could have been expected, while the fact that he had been instrumental in raising up men, as his sons in the gospel, competent to carry out, and to continue in operation, the plans he had devised for the salvation of the world, evinces the wisdom and energy with which he had applied himself to his work. While, therefore, his weeping friends stood around his bed, and heard his last dying words, "The best of all is, God is with us," they gathered fresh courage to trust in the God of his life for a continuance of his blessing upon his mourning Church.

In consequence of this afflictive intelligence, Dr. Coke hastened to prepare for his departure from the continent, that he might mingle his sorrows with his brethren in Europe over the loss they had sustained in the death of Mr. Wesley. On his way he stopped at Baltimore, and on Sabbath preached a sermon on the occasion of the death of Mr. Wesley, in which he mentioned some things which gave offense to his American brethren. His profound sorrow at the loss of Mr. Wesley, though an event which, in the ordinary course of nature, must have been anticipated as near at hand, and the keen sensibilities of his heart to every thing which had the remotest tendency to tarnish the glory of that great man, led him to say, in the above sermon, that the act of leaving Mr. Wesley's name from the minutes probably hastened his death.

This circumstance would be hardly worthy of notice, had not some persons, more distinguished for their petulance than their candor, seized upon it for the purpose of disparaging the character of the American conference. In addition to what has already been said in reference to this matter, the following particulars may serve to vindicate the conduct of the conference, as well as to apologize for the precipitancy of Dr. Coke in making the assertion, erroneous in itself, in so public a manner — a fault amply atoned for by the sincerity and frankness with which he afterward deported himself toward his American brethren. Were the judgments of mankind infallible in all cases, we should be saved the necessity of offering apologies for such venial instances of human infirmity.

That we may rightly understand this subject, it is necessary to review some of the doings of the conferences of 1784 and 1787. The minute of the conference of 1784, already noticed, respecting obeying Mr. Wesley during his lifetime, stood unrepealed until 1787, when it was omitted. Among other reasons for this omission, one unquestionably was, to prevent any one from accusing them, as some had already done, of being under the dictation and control of a British subject, who had written against the American revolution, and thereby

of subjecting themselves to the suspicion of disloyalty to their own government; and also to remove every apprehension of having Bishop Asbury, whom they so highly respected and affectionately loved, taken from among them. This was an event the more to be deprecated, as they knew of no one who could fill his place. He had grown up with them — had suffered and sympathized with them during a protracted and sanguinary war — had fully identified his interests, his weal or woe, with theirs and had, moreover, become familiar with their character and peculiar circumstances, both as American citizens and as Methodist preachers; and hence, whatever deference they might have felt for Dr. Coke — and they certainly were not deficient in love and respect for him — past experience convinced them that he did not understand their affairs so well as did Bishop Asbury. And that which gave origin to their fears that such a dictation as has been supposed might be exercised over their affairs, was the fact heretofore alluded to, that in 1787, Dr. Coke, at the request of Mr. Wesley, altered the time of holding the General Conference, without consulting the American preachers, and also requested Mr. Whatcoat to be elected a joint superintendent with Bishop Asbury.⁸ That Mr. Wesley was dissatisfied with this omission is certain, from some expressions in his letters to Bishop Asbury about that time, to which the bishop alludes in the above notice of Mr. Wesley's death, and which probably led to the famous letter in which Bishop Asbury is censured for taking the title of bishop, concerning which so much has been said by the enemies of Methodist episcopacy.⁹

As to the minute to which allusion has been made, it was a voluntary act of the conference, and not a contract mutually entered into between them and Mr. Wesley, and therefore its omission in 1787 was no violation of a pledged faith between the parties. But as some of the enemies of Bishop Asbury have blamed him in this business, it seems proper to give his own version of these acts of the conference, with a view to justify himself in reference to this affair. He says, "I never approved of that binding minute," alluding to the minute of 1784, in which they promised obedience to Mr. Wesley in matters of church government: —

8 Mr. Wesley undoubtedly alludes to this unpleasant affair in his Journal, under date of July 26, 1787. He says, "We were agreeably surprised with the arrival of Dr. Coke, who came from Philadelphia in nine and twenty days, and gave us a pleasing account of the work of God in America." — "I desired all our preachers to meet me and consider the state of our brethren in America, who have been terribly frightened at their own shadow, as if the English preachers were just going to enslave them. I believe that fear is now over, and they are more aware of Satan's devices." Their fears, whether groundless or not, were removed by the assurance they received from Dr. Coke, that he would not again interpose his authority while at a distance from them, in altering the time for holding their conferences; or when here, of stationing the preachers without the concurrence of Bishop Asbury.

9 For the clearing up of all these difficulties, and the vindication of Bishop Asbury, see *Original Church of Christ*, p. 143.

“I did not think it practical expediency to obey Mr. Wesley at three thousand miles’ distance, in all matters relative to church government; neither did brother Whatcoat, nor several others. At the first General Conference I was mute and modest when it passed, and I was mute when it was expunged. For this Mr. Wesley blamed me, and was displeased that I did not rather reject the whole connection, or leave them, if they did not comply. But I could not give up the connection so easily, after laboring so many years with and for them.”

But although Mr. Wesley suffered a momentary displeasure to arise in his mind on account of their rescinding the rule in question, and with characteristic plainness expressed his dissatisfaction to Bishop Asbury, yet when the thing was fully explained to him, together with the motives which prompted them to that act, he became satisfied with the uprightness of their conduct, and expressed, only twenty-nine days before his death, his unabated attachment to his American brethren, in the following letter to the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper: —

Near London, Feb. 1, 1791.

“My Dear Brother, — Those who desire to write, or say any thing to me, have no time to lose; for time has shaken me by the hand, and death is not far behind. But I have reason to be thankful for the time that is past: I felt few of the infirmities of age for fourscore and six years. It was not till a year and a half ago that my strength and sight failed. And still I am enabled to scrawl a little, and to creep, though I cannot run. Probably I should not be able to do so much, did not many of you assist me by your prayers. I have given a distinct account of the work of God which has been wrought in Britain and Ireland for more than half a century. We want some of you to give us a connected relation of what our Lord has been doing in America, from the time that Richard Boardman accepted the invitation, and left his country to serve you. See that you never give place to one thought of separating from your brethren in Europe. Lose no opportunity of declaring to all men that the Methodists are one people in all the world; and that it is their full determination so to continue, Though mountains rise, and oceans roll, To sever us in vain.

To the care of our common Lord, I commit you; and am your affectionate friend and brother,

“John Wesley.”

After reading such an epistle as this, who can doubt of the writer’s affectionate regard for his American brethren, as well as his strong desire for their indissoluble union with their brethren in Europe? — Such sentiments were highly worthy the apostolic character which Mr. Wesley sustained, as well as the position he occupied as the founder and leader of the entire denomination on both sides of the Atlantic — standing, as he did, upon the margin of time, with eternity full in his view! May it ever be the aim of both families of the Methodists to cultivate the spirit herein recommended!

Having arranged his affairs for his departure to England, on the 14th of May, after an affectionate parting with Bishop Asbury and several of the preachers who were assembled in

Philadelphia, Dr. Coke set sail for London, where he arrived in safety after a short and pleasant voyage. On his arrival in England, at this eventful crisis in the history of Methodism, he found that suspicions had been engendered in the circle of his acquaintance respecting the purity of his motives in hastening from his work in America. Though his future conduct put to silence all such suspicions, yet to a mind alive to every thing which would affect his reputation, and thereby wound the holy cause in which he was engaged, it was no small trial of his faith and patience to have the purity of his motives questioned, or his conduct unjustly censured. In the midst of these conflicts, confiding in the integrity of his own heart, and relying upon the protection of him who had been a never-failing source of consolation to him, both in adversity and prosperity, Dr. Coke silently bowed to the inscrutable ways of divine Providence, while in the meantime he was cheered by the reception of the following friendly and sympathizing letter from Bishop Asbury, which, as belonging to the history of the times, and as exemplifying the spirit and manner in which the writer employed his time, is given entire. It is as follows: —

“Rev. and Most Dear Sir, — If yet in time, this brings greeting. Rejoice with me that the last has been a year of general blessing to the church of God in this wilderness. We humbly hope two thousand souls were born of God, one of which is well ascertained in Jersey and York. East, west, north, and south, the glory of God spreads.

“I have served the Church upward of twenty-five years in Europe and America. All the property I have gained is two old horses, the constant companions of my toil, six if not seven thousand miles every year. When we have no ferryboats, they swim the rivers. As to clothing, I am nearly the same as at the first: neither have I silver nor gold, nor any property. My confidential friends know that I lie not in this matter. I am resolved not to claim any property in the Book Concern. Increase as it may, it will be sacred to invalid preachers, the college, and the schools. I would not have my name mentioned as doing, having, being any thing but dust.

“I soar, indeed, but it is over the tops of the highest mountains we have, which may vie with the Alps. I creep sometimes upon my hands and knees up the slippery ascent; and to serve the Church, and the ministers of it, what I gain is many a reflection from both sides of the Atlantic. I have lived long enough to be loved and hated, to be admired and feared.

“If it were not for the suspicions of some, and the pride and ignorance of others, I am of opinion I could make provision by collections, profits on books, and donations in land, to take two thousand children under the best plan or education ever known in this country. The Lord begins to smile on our Kingswood school.¹⁰ One promising young man is gone forth, another is ready, and several have been under awakenings. None so healthy and orderly

10 It is presumed that this alludes to the Cokesbury College, as it is not known to the writer that any other seminary or learning, under the patronage of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was then in existence.

as our children; and some promise great talents for learning. The obstinate and ignorant oppose, among preachers and people, while the judicious for good sense and piety, in church and state, admire and applaud. I am, with most dutiful respect, as ever, your son in the gospel,

“Francis Asbury.”

This letter shows not only the high sense which Bishop Asbury entertained for the character of Dr. Coke, his ardent desire for his welfare, and the prosperity of the work of God in the conversion of sinners, but also the great interest he took in the cause of education, affirming that none but the “obstinate and ignorant” opposed their laudable efforts to extend its benefits to the youth of our land; and that the judicious in church and state admired and applauded the literary institution which they had established. And though Providence seemed to frown upon the praiseworthy attempts which they made in the case of education, it was never lost sight of by its friends, but, as we shall see in the course of our history, finally became an integral part of the general system of diffusing the lights of knowledge and Christianity among the inhabitants of this western world. That, however which cheered their hearts and animated them with fresh courage to pursue their way, in the midst of the signals of mourning which were hung out as tokens of sorrow for the loss of such a man as John Wesley, was the ingathering of souls into the fold of Christ, and the continual expansion of their field of gospel labor. While the strife of tongues was heard uttering reproach upon their character and conduct, conscious of the integrity of their hearts, and the purity of their motive, they rejoiced in beholding the right hand of their God stretched out to do them good, to sanction the efforts of their hearts and hands. The following will show the result of this year’s labor: —
Numbers in the Church: Whites This year, 50,385, Last year, 45,949; Increase, 4,436; Colored This year, 12,884, Last year, 11,682; Increase, 1,202; [Corrected] Total This year, 63,269,¹¹ Last year, 57,631; Increase, 5,638; Preachers This year, 250, Last year, 227; Increase 23.

¹¹ There is an error in the printed minutes for this year of 12,884 in the aggregate number of the whites, which is there stated to be 63,269. This error originated from adding the number of the colored to the whites, and at the same time retaining the number of the colored in a separate column.

CHAPTER 3

An Account of the several Annual Conferences, and of the General Conference of 1792.

There were no less than eighteen annual conferences held this year, the particulars of which, however, it seem unnecessary to notice, except that the following new circuits were added: Scoperlong and Trent, in North Carolina; Highco, in the south; Oconee and Elbert, in Georgia; Staten Island and Tioga, in New York; Needham in Massachusetts; Providence, in Rhode Island; Cataraqua and Oswegotchie, in Upper Canada.

The above-mentioned eighteen conferences were attended by Bishop Asbury in about eight months, during which time he traveled through most of the states in the Union, preaching, as usual, almost every day, and suffering many hardships: but in the midst of all, he rejoiced in beholding the extension of the work of God in many places.

This year he passed into the state of Tennessee, and preached to the people in that newly settled country. And as this is the first account we have of the introduction of Methodism into that country, it seems proper to give some account of its early settlement.

The earliest settlements made in Tennessee were about 1770, by emigrants from North Carolina and Virginia; and the country was considered a part of the former state until the year 1790, when it was erected by congress into the "Territory south of Ohio;" and in 1795, Tennessee was admitted into the Union as one of the federal states.

As to the general state of religion and morals at the time the Methodist preachers first visited Tennessee, our information is very imperfect. It is to be presumed, however, that, as in most new countries, the means of grace were within the reach of but few, and that those hardy adventurers who first peopled the wilderness of this new territory were chiefly actuated by a desire to enlarge their earthly possessions, and not, like the pilgrims who first settled New England, to insure religious privileges, as these were fully enjoyed at home. Some idea, however, may be had, of the general state of society from the fact, that the tour of Bishop Asbury through the wilderness was in company with a guard, and amid "confused accounts of Indians," who, they feared, would intercept their path; and the following extract from his Journal, giving an account of his entrance from Tennessee into the state of Kentucky, will show some of the hardships which he and others had to undergo while carrying the "glad tidings of salvation" into this wilderness, and likewise exhibit some of the honors conferred upon this "strutting bishop," as some of his heartless revilers have called him. He says, — "Wednesday 5. This morning we again swam the river," (namely, Laurel River,) "and the west fork thereof. My little horse was ready to fail. I was steeped with water up to the waist. About 7 o'clock, with hard pushing, we reached the Crab Orchard. How much I have suffered in this journey is only known to God and myself. What added much to its disagreeableness was the extreme filthiness of the houses."

Again he says, under date of May 1, —

“An alarm was spreading of a depredation committed by the Indians on the east and west frontiers of the settlements; in the former, report says, one man was killed; in the latter, many men, women, and children; every thing is in motion. There having been so many about me at conference, my rest was much broken I hoped to repair it, and get refreshed before I set out to return through the wilderness, but the continual arrival of people until midnight, the barking of dogs, and other annoyances prevented. Next night we reached Crab Orchard, where thirty or forty people were compelled to crowd into one mean house. We could get no more rest here than we did in the wilderness. We came the old way by Scagg’s Creek and Rock Castle, supposing it to be safer, as it is a road less frequented, and therefore less liable to be waylaid by the savages. My body by this time was well tried. I had a violent fever and pain in my head; and I stretched myself on the cold ground, and borrowing clothes to keep me warm, by the mercy of God, I slept for five hours. Next morning we set off early, and passed beyond Richland Creek. Here we were in danger, if anywhere. I could have slept, but was afraid. Seeing the drowsiness of the company, I walked the encampment, and watched the sentries the whole night. Early next morning we made our way to Robinson’s Station. We had the best company I ever met with — thirty-six good travelers and a few warriors; but we had a packhorse, some old men, and two tired horses.” He adds: — “Through infinite mercy we came safe:” and then he exclaims, “Rest, poor house of clay from such exertions! Return, O my soul, to thy rest!”

Let the present race of Methodist preachers and missionaries look at this picture, and learn from it how the fields were won by such veteran soldiers of the cross.

Having performed this journey through these newly settled countries, he returned to the older states, and attended the several conferences, as before stated, preparatory to the General Conference, which met in the city of Baltimore.

At these conferences, two preachers, namely, Beverly Allen¹² and Andrew Harpending were expelled from the Church for immoral conduct. Thomas Weatherford, Peter Massie, and

12 The end of this unhappy man reads a fearful lesson to all those who presume to trifle with sacred things. In the notice we have taken of the rise and progress of Methodism in Charleston, South Carolina, we have seen that Mr. Allen brought a great reproach upon the Church in that place by his apostasy. What the particular sin was by which he thus wounded the cause of God, I am not informed; but from a notice of him in Bishop Asbury’s Journal, vol. ii, page 184, it appears that in the bishop’s estimation he had been “going from bad to worse for seven or eight years,” speaking hard things against the bishop among the people, and writing to Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke, and thereby stirring up prejudice in their minds, as is presumed, against Bishop Asbury. On this account, says the bishop, “I have had my opinion of him these nine years, and gave Dr. Coke my thoughts of him before his ordination.” It seems he was at length arrested and committed to jail for shooting the Marshall of the district, Major Forsyth, through the head while the Marshall was attempting to serve a writ upon him. This happened two years after his expulsion. Of the particulars of his death I have not been able to find any account.

George Browning had died in peace. Fourteen were located The work of God was generally prosperous, though the increase was not so large as in some former years, as may be seen by the following statement: —

Numbers in the Church: Whites This year, 52,109, Last year, 50,385; Increase 1,724; Colored This year, 13,871, Last year, 12,884; Increase, 987; Total This year, 65,980, Last year, 63,269; Increase, 2,711; Preachers This year, 266, Last year, 250; Increase, 16.

General Conference of 1792

As has been seen in the preceding pages, the general affairs of the Church had been conducted heretofore chiefly in the several annual conferences, which were considered only as so many parts of the whole body; for nothing was allowed binding upon all unless it were approved of by each and every of these separate conferences. It is true, that the Christmas conference of 1784, at which the Church was organized, was considered a general conference, because all the preachers were invited to attend, for the transaction of the important business then and there to be submitted to them; and therefore the acts and doings of that conference were considered to be binding upon the whole Church. As the work continually increased and spread over such a large and extended territory, it was found impracticable for all the preachers to assemble annually in one place, without too great a consumption of time and expense; and hence the practice which had been adopted of appointing several conferences in the same year in different parts of the country, for the convenience of both the bishop and the preachers; but as one of these conferences could not make laws for all the rest, nor yet all the rest for that one without its consent; and as it was not likely that so many independent bodies could be brought to harmonize in all things pertaining to the welfare of the Church; there was danger from this state of things of a dissolution of the body, and the establishment of a number of separate and distinct communities, acting independently of each other.

To prevent evils of this character, and to create a center of union to the entire body, the council had been instituted; but this unpopular measure, not answering the end of its organization, was by general consent dissolved, and a General Conference called in its place. This was, it seems, agreed upon by the several annual conferences which had been held this year. This conference assembled in the city of Baltimore on the first day of November, 1792, and was composed of all the traveling preachers who had been received into full connection. As this was considered the first regular General Conference, and as those who composed it came together under an expectation that very important matters would be transacted, it seems proper to give a particular account of their acts and doings. Dr. Coke had returned from Europe, and presided, conjointly with Bishop Asbury, over their deliberations.

As there were no restrictions upon the powers of this conference, the entire Discipline of the Church came up for review and revision; but to prevent, as far as possible, any improper innovation upon existing rules, or the premature adoption of new regulations, they agreed

that “it shall take two-thirds of all the members of the conference to make any new rule, or abolish an old one; but a majority may alter or amend any rule.”

They soon had an opportunity to try the strength of this rule in preserving them from an innovation upon established usage, in respect to the power of stationing the preachers. With a view to keep up the itinerancy through the medium of an efficient general superintendency it had been established at the Christmas conference, and incorporated as a rule of Discipline, that the power of appointing the preachers to their several stations should be invested in the bishops. With this some had become dissatisfied; and at this conference the Rev. James O’Kelly, a very popular preacher in the state of Virginia, who had acted as a presiding elder in that district for several years, brought forward the following resolution: —

“After the bishop appoints the preachers at the conference to their several circuits, if any one think himself injured by the appointment, he shall have liberty to appeal to the conference and state his objections; and if the conference approve his objections, the bishop shall appoint him to another circuit.”

This resolution elicited a very strong debate, which lasted for about three days, and was finally lost by a large majority. This gave great dissatisfaction to the mover and some of his particular friends, and the next morning he sent a letter to the conference, informing them that he could no longer hold his seat among them, because his appeal was rejected. With a view to remove his objections, and reconcile him to the present order of things, a committee was appointed by the conference to confer with Mr. O’Kelly and his partisans; but their labors were ineffectual, and they withdrew from the Church, and soon began to adopt measures for establishing a separate party.

During the discussion which arose on the above resolution, as it necessarily brought up questions in which the character and conduct of Bishop Asbury were deeply involved, with a view to leave the members of the conference at full liberty to speak their sentiments without restraint, the bishop withdrew from the conference room, and sent them the following note: —

“My Dear Brethren, — Let my absence give you no pain: Dr. Coke presides. I am happily excused from assisting to make laws by which myself am to be governed: I have only to obey and execute. I am happy in the consideration that I never stationed a preacher through enmity or as a punishment. I have acted for the glory of God, and the good of the people, and to promote the usefulness of the preachers. Are you sure that if you please your selves, that the people will be as fully satisfied? They often say, ‘Let us have such a preacher,’ and sometimes, ‘We will not have such a preacher — we will sooner pay him to stay at home.’ Perhaps I must say, ‘His appeal forced him upon you.’ I am one — ye are many. I am as willing to serve you as ever. I want not to sit in any man’s way. I scorn to solicit votes. I am a very trembling, poor creature, to hear praise or dispraise. Speak your minds freely; but

remember, you are only making laws for the present time. It may be, that as in some other things, so in this: a future day may give you further light. I am yours, &c.,

“Francis Asbury. ”¹³

As the secession of Mr. O’Kelly from the Methodist Episcopal Church was the first of any considerable magnitude which had happened, I shall, after having completed the account of the doings of the conference, endeavor to place it fully before the reader, together with its effects upon the Church, as well as upon himself and his party.

As before said, this conference entered into a full review of the doctrine and Discipline of the Church, altering some old, and introducing several new regulations, some of the most important of which I shall notice. The following was made respecting the selection, consecration, and trial of a bishop: —

“Question How is a bishop to be constituted in future?

“Answers By the election of the General Conference, and the laying on of the hands of three bishops, or at least of one bishop and two elders.

“Question If by death, expulsion, or otherwise, there be no bishop remaining in our Church, what shall we do?

“Answers The General Conference shall elect a bishop, the elders, or any three of them, that shall be appointed by the General Conference for that purpose, shall ordain him according to our office of ordination.

“Question To whom is the bishop amenable for his conduct?

“Answers To the General Conference, who have power to expel him for improper conduct, if they see it necessary.

“Question What provision shall be made for the trial of an immoral bishop, in the intervals of the General Conference?

“Answers If the bishop be guilty of immorality, three traveling elders shall call upon him, and examine him on the subject; and if the three elders verily believe that the bishop is guilty of the crime, they shall call to their aid two presiding elders from two districts in the neighborhood of that where the crime was committed, each of which presiding elder shall bring with him two elders, or an elder and a deacon. The above-mentioned nine persons shall form a conference to examine into the charges brought against the bishop; and if two-thirds of them verily believe him to be guilty of the crime laid to his charge, they shall have authority to suspend the bishop until the ensuing General Conference.”

Though a number of circuits had been given in charge to an elder, from the time of the organization in 1784, yet this had been done chiefly by the authority of the general superin-

13 As this question respecting the power of the bishops to appoint the preachers to the stations has frequently been agitated in the conference, at a suitable time I shall endeavor to state it fully and fairly, with the substance of the argument, for and against it, until it was finally set at rest in the year 1828.

tendency, without any express enactment of the General Conference — it was a usage which grew out of the exigencies of the case, the circumstances of the country, and the paucity of ordained ministers. As some had objected to this usage, and expressed doubts respecting the authority of the bishop to make such appointments, the present conference authorized the appointment of presiding elders by the bishop, who should change them at pleasure, provided, nevertheless, that he should “not allow an elder to preside in the same district more than four years successively;” and he was to receive his support out of any surplus money which might be found on a circuit, or if there were no surplus, he was to take his proportion with the several preachers on his district. For the particular duties of a presiding elder, see chap. i, sec. 5, of the Discipline.

Though temporary provision had been made for the wives of traveling preachers, yet until this conference no express rule existed giving them a claim upon the funds of the Church. A rule was now passed allowing the wife an equal claim with her husband, namely, “sixty-four dollars annually,” the nominal amount which had been allowed to a traveling preacher, besides his traveling expenses.

It seems that heretofore the preachers had not been in the habit, nor was it considered lawful, to receive any thing for performing the marriage ceremony; but this prohibition was removed out of the way at this conference, by allowing them to receive whatever might be offered them by those whom they joined in matrimony.

The former usage respecting marriage fees, as well as the following question and answer, which were adopted at this conference; shows how exceedingly scrupulous were our fathers in the church on the subject of compensation for preaching the gospel; and if they deserve censure for any thing, we might feel disposed to administer a gentle rebuke for carrying self-sacrifice to such unreasonable, and, as is thought, unscriptural lengths; for it seems to have led the people to believe that their ministers should hardly “live by the gospel,” or “those which wait at the altar should” not be “partakers with the altar.”

“Question What plan shall we pursue in appropriating the money received by our traveling ministers for marriage fees?

“Answers In all the circuits where the preachers do not receive their full quarterage, let all such money be given into the hands of the stewards, and be equally divided between the traveling preachers of the circuit. In all other cases the money shall be disposed of at the discretion of the district conferences.”

And at the close of the section the following paragraph was added, which, however, has long since ceased to be a rule: —

“No minister or preacher shall receive any money for deficiencies, or on any other account, out of any of our funds or collections, without first giving an exact account of all the money, clothes, and other presents of every kind, which he has received the preceding year.”

Though this rule was made with the very laudable desire to reduce all to as equal a level as possible, and thereby to prevent jealousies which might arise from one being more highly honored than another in pecuniary matters, it was soon found to have an unfavorable bearing in many respects; and as before said, was finally, and with good reason, erased from the Discipline.

With a view to prevent impositions, from unworthy persons obtruding themselves into societies where they were not known, the following advice was given to all who had the charge of circuits: —

“To warn all, from time to time, that none are to remove from one circuit to another, without a recommendation from a preacher of the circuit in these words: — A. B., the bearer, has been an acceptable member in C., and to inform them that without such a certificate they will not be received into other societies.”

This is a standing rule in the Discipline.

The rule respecting the method of settling disputes which might arise between brethren “concerning the payment of debts,” was adopted at this time and afterward modified from time to time, until at the first delegated conference, which sat in the city of New York, in 1812, it was made as it now stands in the Discipline, chap. i, sec. 9. There can be no doubt but that this regulation has had a most happy effect in preventing expensive lawsuits and all those litigations in reference to matters which engender strife and alienate affection.

The section regulating the “method by which immoral traveling ministers or preachers shall be brought to trial, found guilty, and reprov'd or suspended, in the intervals of the conferences,” was considerably modified at this conference; but it had been altered and amended from one General Conference to another, until 1836, when it was so amended as to read as it now stands in the Discipline, chap. i, sec. 18.

The resolution not to “receive a present for administering baptism, or for burying the dead,” was passed at this conference; and it remained unaltered until 1828, when the words “receive a present” were exchanged for “make a charge.” See chap. i, sec. 21.

The twenty-second section of the same chapter, relating to the manner of conducting public worship, was incorporated in the Discipline, and the twenty-fourth section of the same chapter so modified as to discourage the use of fugue tunes, and the attending of singing schools not under our direction.

As provision had been made for supernumerary preachers, the conference appended the following explanatory note respecting the character of such: —

“A supernumerary preacher is one so worn out in the itinerant service as to be rendered incapable of preaching constantly; but at the same time is willing to do any work in the ministry which the conference may direct, and his strength will enable him to perform.”

Before the conference adjourned, they passed a resolution to have another General Conference at the end of four years, to be convened in the city of Baltimore, November 1, 1796,

and that it should be composed of all the traveling preachers who should be in full connection at the time it was to be held.

It was very manifest from what had taken place at this conference, and especially from the temper and conduct of Mr. O'Kelly and his partisans, that a spirit of insubordination was abroad, and that a division of the body would be likely to result from an improper indulgence in speaking against the constituted authorities of the Church. To prevent, as far as practicable, the evils naturally resulting from the course of conduct to be apprehended from those dissentient brethren, and such as they might influence to a spirit of opposition, the conference very opportunely passed the following rule: —

If a member of our Church shall be clearly convicted of endeavoring to sow dissensions in any of our societies, by inveighing against either our doctrine or discipline, such person so offending shall be first reprov'd by the senior preacher of his circuit; and if he afterward persist in such pernicious practices, he shall be expelled the society.”

This leads us to notice now more particularly the secession of Mr. O'Kelly, and the effects it produced upon the cause of religion generally in that part of the country where he more especially operated, and finally upon himself and his adherents. It has already been remarked that Mr. O'Kelly was a very popular preacher, of considerable age and standing in the Church, had acquired great influence in Virginia, and particularly over the minds of the younger preachers in his district.

The reasons which induced him to withdraw from the Church have been before stated. Mr. Lee says, that while he stood and looked at the old man as he took his departure from Baltimore, he felt persuaded that he would not long be idle, but would endeavor to put himself at the head of a party, which, indeed, soon came to pass. Mr. Lee moreover says, that a preacher informed him that O'Kelly denied the doctrine of the Trinity, as held by us; and that it was his intention to have had O'Kelly tried at the conference for preaching false doctrine; and therefore he believed that one cause of his leaving the connection was a fear of being censured for his anti-Methodistical views in respect to this doctrine. However this may be, he soon raised a cry against the Church he had left, and poured forth his anathemas more particularly upon the head of Bishop Asbury, whose power in stationing the preachers he had so violently opposed. To these complaints Bishop Asbury replies, in his sententious style as follows: —

“I bid such adieu, and appeal to the bar of God. I have no time to contend, having better work to do. If we lose some children, God will give us more. Ah! this is the mercy, the justice of some, who, under God, owe their all to me and my tyrants, so called. The Lord judge between them and me.”

After Mr. O'Kelly set up for himself, he published a pamphlet, the contents of which it is not necessary at this day to recite, which was answered by the Rev. Mr. Snethen, in which the bishop is fully vindicated from all the aspersions of his enemies.

Though all the traveling preachers, except one, who withdrew with O'Kelly, returned to the Church, yet there were several local preachers, and a considerable number of private members, who became warmly attached to him, and they made several efforts to organize themselves into a church more in conformity to their notions of republican principles, until finally they renounced all creeds and confessions, and professed to take the New Testament alone for the role of their government, claiming the right, of course, to interpret it according to their own views of order and propriety; and as party politics ran high in Virginia at that time, they took the popular name of "Republican Methodists," with James O'Kelly as their head man.

In the latter part of the year 1793 they began to form societies on a plan which should exclude all superiority of one preacher over another, and at the same time promised to the people greater liberties than they could enjoy among their old brethren. This popular theme took with many, by which means hundreds of the people were induced to forsake the Methodist Episcopal Church, and to join the standard of revolt, so that in some places whole societies were broken up, and others divided and thrown into confusion, taking with them some houses of worship, while others were voluntarily left by our preachers, to avoid a thriftless contention.

As Mr. O'Kelly lived in the southern part of Virginia, the spirit of disaffection spread among some of the societies in North Carolina, infecting a number of local preachers, as well as several societies. What rendered this separation more destructive in its effects upon the interests of pure religion, was the bitterness of spirit with which it was conducted, especially in its hostility to bishops, and, as they called them, their servile creatures, the presiding elders — though the leader of the party had himself been a presiding elder for several years. Such are the inconsistencies of fanaticism, when impelled on by personal animosity.

This spirit, under the guidance of such minds, could not do otherwise than produce disastrous results to the interests of true religion. Instead of contending against sin and its pernicious effects, the party seemed to exhaust all their powers against episcopacy, and those debatable points of church government and economy which have always elicited less or more of controversy, and which these disputants were least of all likely to set at rest. And this controversy had such an effect upon the minds of many who were not under the influence of a religious principle that they became deeply prejudiced against all religion; and thus the secession was doubtless a means of hardening them in their iniquity.

Finding at length that the title already assumed was not likely to answer the purpose intended, Mr. O'Kelly published a pamphlet in 1801, in which he called his party "The Christian Church." This device, however, did not dissolve the charm by which those deluded men were induced to follow their leader, until a happy thought led them to conclude that by assuming such a title they proscribed all others from the Christian character; and thus becoming startled at their own exclusiveness, they began to contend among themselves, and then to

divide and subdivide; until in a few years scarcely a vestige of them was to be found in all Virginia. So ended this secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church, which began in the obstinate attachment of a vain man to his favorite theory, and ended in the entire overthrow of his power and popularity, and carried along with it, as is greatly to be feared, many to destruction. But what were its effects upon the prime leader of the revolt? Though he succeeded for a time to draw off disciples after him, and to excite a deep-rooted prejudice against the General Conference and Bishop Asbury, he gradually declined in power and influence, lost the confidence and affection of the people generally, and finally died in comparative obscurity, leaving behind him a sad picture of human infirmity, and a melancholy evidence of the pernicious effects of cleaving so obstinately to a theory which, right or wrong, is condemned as inexpedient by a majority of the good men with whom he may be associated. As, however, Bishop Asbury bore such a conspicuous part in this controversy, and was made the butt of so many abusive epithets, it is pleasant to witness the Christian disposition he manifested toward his fallen antagonist near the close of Mr. O'Kelly's life. Under date of Friday, August 20, 1802, he says, —

“Mr. O'Kelly having been taken ill in town,” (that is, the town of Winchester, Va.) “I sent two of our brethren, Reed and Wells, to see him, by whom I signified to him that if he wished to see me, I would wait on him: he desired a visit, which I made him on Monday, August 23. We met in peace, asked of each other's welfare, talked of persons and things indifferently, prayed, and parted in peace. Not a word was said of the troubles of former times. Perhaps this is the last interview we shall have upon earth.”

It is to be hoped, therefore, from the manner in which this interview was sought and obtained, conducted and ended, that ere death separated them, old differences and animosities were forgotten, and that the God of mercy extended that mercy to Mr. O'Kelly which they, as is presumed, extended to each other, and that he now rests where his “iniquities are forgotten and his sins covered.”

It may be proper to remark, however, that it was a long time before the societies in Virginia fully recovered from the deleterious effects of this secession. The spirits of many were exasperated against each other, brotherly love was greatly diminished, and as a consequence necessarily resulting from this state of things, the influence of the Church upon the public mind was much weakened and circumscribed, and the preaching of the gospel under these circumstances was not attended with its wonted effects. By a steady perseverance, however, these sad results of a pertinacious adherence to a favorite theory gradually subsided; and the cause of God, as proposed and advocated by the Methodist ministry, has since greatly prospered in that part of the country.

A few remarks will close the present volume.

Methodism had now existed in this country about thirty-six years, and numbered in its communion, including preachers and people, white and colored, sixty-six thousand, two

hundred and forty-six souls. The entire population of the United States at that time was about four millions; if we allow three minors and others, who attended upon public worship among them, to each communicant, the population of the Methodist Episcopal Church would amount to about one hundred and ninety-eight thousand. According to the this estimation, about one-twentieth part of the entire population were brought under Methodist influence in the short space of thirty-six years. This, it should be remembered, had been effected from nothing, that is, we had no church members with whom to begin, except the few solitary emigrants from Ireland, as noted in the second chapter of this work.

In this respect our circumstances were different from all the principal denominations in the country. From the very beginning of the settlements, the members of the English Church, the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Dutch Reformed, Lutherans, and the Baptists were here established, some of them in some of the colonies by law, and in others in conformity to the ecclesiastical organizations in the respective countries whence they came. They were, therefore, all here before us, peaceably enjoying all their immunities, civil and religious. Whereas when the Methodists arrived they had to begin every thing anew, and to contend with all sorts of opposition, and to work their way unaided by any human power, except so far as they were favored by those, from time to time, who were convinced of the truth of their doctrine, and the Scriptural character of their economy.

From these facts it is easy to perceive the vast advantages, so far as mere human agency is concerned, those denominations possessed over the Methodists. Those biases arising from religious habits, from education, and from legal protection, were all in their favor. The seminaries of learning, high and low, were under their control, and all the civil offices were filled by men belonging either to some one of these denominations, or from among those who had their religion yet to choose, or by such as were biased by infidel principles. And, moreover, for a period of eighteen years, which includes just one half the time we had had an existence here, the Methodists were but a society, and consequently were dependent upon other denominations for the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. Yet, under all these disadvantages, they prospered abundantly, increased in number and strength, and had spread themselves over the length and breadth of the land.

Now the question which forces itself upon us is, To what were they indebted for this unexampled prosperity? It cannot be attributed to the influence they possessed over the public mind — for, in fact, they had none, only so far as it was gained in the midst of obloquy and opposition, as their doctrine, character, and labors became gradually known to the people. Neither can it be attributed to their learning or profound knowledge. Though their founders were both able and learned, yet the first missionaries who came to this country, though men of sound understanding and well read in the sacred Scriptures, were by no means learned, according to the common acceptance of that word; and as to those who were, from time to time, raised up here, some of them hardly understood their mother tongue correctly, and

but few could boast of any thing more than a common English education. While they were men of strong common sense and sound judgment, and some of them possessed a great flow of natural eloquence, yet, having been taken chiefly from the common walks of life, they enjoyed none of those qualifications which arise from a classical and scientific course of study. They were, however, "mighty in the Scriptures," "full of faith and the Holy Ghost," and "needed not that any one should teach them which be the first principles of Christ," for they could call "him Christ by the Holy Spirit," having received the "witness in themselves that they were born of God."

These facts force us to the conclusion that their prosperity must be attributed to the blessing of God upon their labors. They, in fact, encountered a host of opposers. The entire religious community, as well as the vicious rabble and the infidel part of the community, were arrayed against them. The prejudices of education, of sectarianism, of the depravity of unregenerate sinners, and the rivalry of denominational jealousy, were in hostility to the progress of Methodism. Yet, in spite of all this mighty phalanx of opposing forces, it won its way among the people, converting thousands to its standard. We therefore say again, that its forward course can be accounted for only by supposing the sanction of the most high God upon their labors.

But will God give his sanction to bad men? Surely he will not. Those men, therefore, who were engaged in this cause were eminently holy and good. They professed to have an experience of divine things upon the heart, and to be moved by the Holy Ghost to this work. They spoke therefore of the things which they had felt and seen, and God bore testimony to their word. Instead of amusing the people with mere speculative truths, they addressed themselves directly to the heart, aiming, above all other things, to effect a radical reformation there, knowing full well that a reformation of life would necessarily follow. It was this mode of preaching which gave such success to their efforts, and inspired the confidence of those who had an experimental knowledge of divine things.

It has been said that God gave his sanction to their labors. We do not wish to be misunderstood upon this subject. We do not infer the blessing of God upon the labors of a ministry merely because proselytes are made. Mohammed made proselytes to his false religion by the power of the sword faster than Jesus Christ did by the power of his miracles and the purity of his doctrine. And any impostor, or mere formal minister, by the fascinating charms of his eloquence, or the cunning artifices to which he will resort, may succeed in proselytizing others to his party without at all benefiting their souls, or reforming their lives. The mere multiplication of converts to a system is no proof of itself that it has the sanction of the God of truth and love.

We have not, therefore, enumerated the communicants of the Methodist Episcopal Church as an evidence, of itself, that its ministry were moving in obedience to God's will, and in the order of his providence. Though they had been as "numerous as the sands upon the seashore,"

had they been destitute of righteousness, they would be no proof that the instruments of their conversion were sent of God.

But what we insist upon is, that these men preached the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ, and that those who were converted by their instrumentality were really “brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God” — that such a reformation of heart and life was effected as resulted in a uniform obedience to the commands of God; and that those who were brought under the doctrine and disciplinary regulations of this Church, brought forth the “fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” — thus giving evidence that they were indeed “born of the Spirit,” and enjoyed His witness of their adoption into the family of God.

We speak of them as a body. Though it is not probable that there were many hypocrites who came among them — there being no temptation to such to identify themselves with them — yet there were doubtless some such, and others who imposed upon themselves and others; and some who apostatized from the faith — these could not do otherwise than reproach the cause they had espoused. But whenever such were discovered, if they could not be reclaimed from their wanderings, the strict discipline which was enforced cut them off from the communion of the faithful; and thus was the Church freed from the responsibility of their conduct, and kept pure from their corrupting example. By this faithful preaching of the word, and enforcement of discipline, the main body was kept in a healthy state, and presented a living example of the purity and excellence of their religion. This was a resistless argument in their favor.

Another thing which made them more extensively useful was, their itinerating mode of preaching the gospel. Had these ministers confined their labors to insulated congregations, as most of the ministers of other denominations did, they never could have realized that diffusive spread of evangelical religion which actually accompanied their efforts. Had John Wesley, instead of going forth into the “highways and hedges” to call sinners to repentance, settled himself over a parish, Methodism had been either “hid in a corner,” or never have had an existence. It was his itinerating so largely, and preaching wherever he could find access to the people, which gave such efficiency to his efforts, and such a wide spread to the gospel by his instrumentality.

But in this country especially, many parts of which were newly settled, and therefore but sparsely populated, had not those preachers carried the gospel to the people by traversing the country, they had remained destitute of the means of salvation. We may, therefore, attribute the success which attended their labors to the blessing of God on an itinerant ministry — on a ministry which went everywhere preaching, “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power.” This it was which enabled them to “reach even beyond themselves,” in preaching the gospel of Christ, and of gathering thousands of souls into his fold.

These men devoted themselves entirely and exclusively to this work, remembering, as their Discipline admonished them, that it was “not their business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society, but to save as many souls as possible; to bring as many sinners as they can to repentance, and with all their power to build them up in holiness, “without which they cannot see the Lord.” It was this diligence in their calling, of being in soul and body devoted to it, which enabled them to accomplish so much in so short a time, and that, too, in the midst of reproach and opposition.

It was, indeed, this very devotion, this diligence, these zealous efforts in the cause of their divine Master, which provoked much of the opposition which they had to encounter. The lukewarm clergy were aroused to indignation at seeing themselves rivaled by those whom they affected to despise on account of their erratic habits and inferiority in point of literature and science. And as these zealous itinerants made their pointed appeals to the consciences of sinners, denounced the just judgments of God upon hardened offenders, their ire was often kindled against those who thus “reproved them in the gate.” Wherever these flaming messengers of Jesus Christ came, they disturbed the false peace of the lukewarm, awakened the conscience of the sleeping sinner, and gave him no rest until he surrendered his heart to Christ. They not only “preached in the great congregation” “in the city full,” but “into whatever house they entered,” they addressed themselves personally to its inmates, urging them to be “reconciled to God;” and they accompanied all their efforts by earnest prayer, both public and private, that God would sanction their labors by sending upon them the energies of the Holy Spirit.

The doctrines, too, which they principally insisted upon, had a direct tendency to produce the desired effect upon the heart and life. While they held, in common with other orthodox Christians, to the hereditary depravity of the human heart, the deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, the necessity of repentance and faith; that which they pressed upon their hearers with the greatest earnestness was, the necessity of the new birth, and the privilege of their having a knowledge, by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, of the forgiveness of sins, through, faith in the blood of Christ; and as a necessary consequence of this, and as naturally flowing from it, provided they persevered, holiness of heart and life. On this topic they dwelt with an emphasis and an earnestness peculiar to themselves. The doctrine itself, though held by most orthodox churches, as is manifest from their articles of faith and formularies of religion, was allowed to sleep in their books, or was not brought before the people with that prominence which its importance demands, and with that particularity and definiteness which its vitality in the Christian system renders essential to the success of the gospel ministry. But on this vital point the Methodist ministers bent their whole force. If they pressed upon the sinner a sense of his depravity and actual guilt, it was to make him feel the necessity of repentance and forgiveness. If they presented to him the death of Christ, as the meritorious cause of the sinner’s salvation, it was to encourage him to look to that source for pardon in

his blood. If the Holy Spirit was spoken of as the helper of our infirmities, and as a leader into all truth, it was that he might be claimed by the penitent sinner as the sealer of his pardon, and as a witnesser of his "acceptance in the Beloved." Thus all the doctrines of the gospel were brought to have a bearing on this point, that all who were induced to "seek after God" might have no rest until they found "redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

By preaching this doctrine everywhere, to all classes of people, making it prominent in every sermon, and exhibiting it as the common privilege of all penitent sinners to experience, they were blessed of God in their labors, and rejoiced over returning prodigals to their Father's house.

From all these facts — and that they are facts is attested by every person who is at all acquainted with our history — we conclude that this work was eminently the work of God. Who will say it was not? Whoever does this must also say, that men by mere human effort, unassisted by the Holy Spirit, may turn more sinners from the error of their ways, and bring them into all holy living, than all the clergy in the country beside! Or else they must deny that sinners were thus converted from the error of their ways. But to deny this, would be to fly in the face of the plainest facts on record — facts attested by thousands of witnesses. And to assert the former, that such a reformation may be effected by human persuasion alone, is to deny the necessity of the gospel to reform sinners from their sinfulness — it is, in fact, saying that the gospel is a "cunningly devised fable," totally unnecessary for the salvation of a lost world. For if sinners may be reformed by means of "enticing words of man's wisdom," then may we dispense with the gospel, with the blood of Christ, and the energies of the Holy Spirit. But as all orthodox Christians acknowledge the indispensable necessity of these to renovate the sinner's heart, and to make him holy all manner of conversation, it follows most conclusively, that the reformation which accompanied the labors of the Methodist ministry was the work of God.

Hence we have a right to infer that, to insure a continuance of his sanction upon our future efforts, all we have to do is to "walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing." Thus living and working, the same benevolent Being who guided, protected, and so abundantly blessed the labors of our fathers in the gospel, will not fail to pour upon us and our children the blessings of his salvation.

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