

All Rights Reserved By HDM For This Digital Publication
Copyright 1998 Holiness Data Ministry

Duplication of this CD by any means is forbidden, and
copies of individual files must be made in accordance with
the restrictions stated in the B4Ucopy.txt file on this CD.

* * * * *

THE TWO "BLACK HARRYS"
Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

* * * * *

Digital Edition 03/09/98
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

CONTENTS

Introduction

Part 1
Black Harry Of St. Eustatius

Part 2
"Black Harry" Hosier

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

Two African Americans, both called "Black Harry," exerted a powerful influence for God and for early Methodism in this hemisphere: -- "Black Harry" of Eustatius, and "Black Harry" Hosier. They were contemporaries, part of the great spiritual influence of both being exerted in the 1780s.

The Fact of Two "Black Harrys" Established by Methodist Historians

The dates and events in their lives seem to suggest the possibility that the two "Black Harrys" could have been the same individual. However, that they were two separate individuals is confirmed by E. J. Drinkhouse and Abel Stevens. Further, I recall finding nothing the writings of any of the Methodist Historians that I consulted that either confounded the two "Black Harrys" as one and the same individual, or which asserted such. Below are excerpts from Drinkhouse and Stevens, confirming that they were two, separate individuals -- (caps are mine):

Edward J. Drinkhouse:-- "They visited and formed societies in other islands. Harry, an American slave who had been brought to these islands, is immortal in Methodism, as Harry of St. Eustatius, to distinguish him from 'Black Harry,' Asbury's traveling companion and eloquent preacher." --- "Dr. Coke landed December 25, 1786, and at once entered upon missionary work, the details of which make a chapter of the most interesting reading furnished by Drew, his biographer, inclusive of the labors and sufferings of Black Harry of St. Eustatius."

Abel Stevens:-- "The route which Asbury recommended to Coke, for the time that remained before the Christmas General Conference, was that which he himself had just gone over, taking in most of the numerous appointments of the Peninsula. 'Black Harry,' (Harry Hosier,) Asbury's traveling servant, who was now to accompany the doctor, was a notable character of that day. [1] Asbury first alludes to him, in 1780 ... (The bracketed #1 preceding is an Endnote number. The following is Stevens' note:) 1 He must not, however, be confounded with, 'Black Harry' of St. Eustatius, who occupies so romantic a place in Coke's subsequent history."

More than once recently, I have been interested to find out more than once that there were "two" individuals of the same name: For years I knew of only one "H. C. Morrison," but some weeks past discovered that there were two: the one being the well-known President of Asbury College, and the other having been a Bishop in the M. E. Church, South. For some time I knew of "Black Harry" Hosier, while only discovering last night about the existence of "Black Harry" of Eustatius. I had thought to do this compilation about the former "Black Harry" and while I was reviewing the references -- lo, and behold -- again, there were two instead of just one. How many more times I shall encounter this phenomenon I know not. I do know that both of these "Black Harrys" were impressively used of God during their lives and the reading of their stories is worthwhile. So, here they are. -- DVM:

* * * * *

Part 1 "BLACK HARRY" OF ST. EUSTATIUS

I have compiled the following account using material from Edward J. Drinkhouse and P. P. Sandford. -- DVM

Wesley's letter to Coke ordering him to convene a General Conference in Baltimore, May 1, 1787, bears date September 6, 1786, and Dr. Coke left England for Nova Scotia September 24 of the same year, so that it is quite certain that he bore it with him. Reaching Antigua, he found that Gilbert deceased, had been succeeded by Baxter in charge of the Methodist work. Dr. Coke landed December 25, 1786, and at once entered upon missionary work, the details of which make a chapter of the most interesting reading furnished by Drew, his biographer, inclusive of the labors and sufferings of "Black Harry of St. Eustatius."

About thirty years prior to Dr. Coke's arrival, Methodism had been introduced into Antigua by Nathaniel Gilbert, Esquire, the speaker of the house of assembly of this island. While on a visit to England for his health, Mr. Gilbert had been converted to God under the preaching of Mr.

Wesley. On his return home he warned blacks and whites to flee the wrath to come. But, amid much reproach, for preaching the gospel to the poor Negroes, God made him instrumental in raising a society of nearly two hundred. Mr. Gilbert's death left the society in a forlorn condition. For several years they were without a minister, but were kept together by two black women, who met them regularly, and prayed with them.

In 1778 Mr. John Baxter, who was a class-leader and a local preacher, arrived at Antigua, as a workman in the dock-yard. He began to preach, and had the pleasure of addressing multitudes, and the still greater pleasure of seeing the work of God prosper in his hands. Unwearied in his exertions, and favored with the smiles of an indulgent Providence, Mr. Baxter persevered until the year 1783, when a Methodist chapel was erected. This was the first ever built in the torrid zone.

Although Mr. Baxter had only devoted a small portion of his time to the work, having continued in his local capacity, yet in eight years after his arrival there had nearly two thousand persons joined his society. Such was the state of things when Dr. Coke arrived.

On walking up the town of St. John's, Dr. Coke met Mr. Baxter in the street, on his way to the chapel to perform divine service, it being Christmas day. Although personally strangers, their mutual joy on this unexpected meeting can be conceived with greater ease than it can be described.

The duties of the day devolving on Dr. Coke, he readily engaged in his Master's service. His reception on the island was of the most flattering kind. Very liberal offers were made him by the inhabitants to induce him to remain. But although he could not be persuaded to take up his residence in Antigua, he was so far satisfied that Mr. Baxter needed assistance, that he consented that one of the missionaries should remain on the island.

Having received invitations to visit other islands, he [Dr. Coke] accordingly visited and preached in Dominica, and afterward at Kingston, in St. Vincent. At Kingston the prospect was so good that he established a mission, and left Mr. Clarke in charge of it. They next visited St. Christopher's, where Dr. Coke preached to a large and respectable congregation. Here Mr. Hammet was stationed under very favorable circumstances. His attempts to introduce the gospel into the islands of Nevis and St. Eustatius were at this time unsuccessful; although at the latter place some free blacks, having notice of his intended visit, had prepared a house for his reception, and united together to defray the expenses of the voyage.

These blacks were awakened by the preaching of a slave named Harry, who had been imported from America some years before this time. Harry had been a member of the Methodist society previous to his removal to St. Eustatius. On his arrival here he found himself without any spiritual companions, and destitute of every public means of grace. He soon assumed courage, and bore public testimony for Christ among his fellow slaves. The novelty of his preaching drew many to hear; and among them the governor of the island, who on one occasion, paid a visit to his humble temple, and, by expressing his approbation of Harry's preaching, indirectly sanctioned it, and screened him from persecution.

Harry continued to preach until his word was attended with great power; many of the slaves were so deeply affected as to fall prostrate under its influence, and to remain in a state of

helplessness for several hours. This created alarm among the planters, and the propriety of allowing him to preach was questioned. It happened one night, not long before Dr. Coke's arrival, that, during Harry's preaching, sixteen were affected in this extraordinary manner. This gave the finishing blow to his ministry. He was ordered to appear immediately before the governor, and was forbidden by him to preach any more, under very severe penalties. But for the interference of a very humane judge, he would have been flogged as well as silenced. His preaching had been instrumental in deeply awakening about twenty souls. Dr. Coke arrived the same day on which Harry had been silenced.

Harry remained silent a considerable time; when, supposing that the ferment had subsided, he again ventured to pray with his associates, not conceiving this to be a breach of the orders which he had received. In this he was deceived. Here [on the island of St. Eustatius] a law had been passed avowedly against religion. It enacted: That if any white man should be found praying with his brethren, that for the first offense he should be fined fifty pieces of eight; for the second offense he should be fined one hundred; and for the third he should be whipped, his goods confiscated, and he should then be banished from the island. The punishment for a free colored man who should be guilty of praying was thirty-nine lashes for the first offense, and whipping and banishment for the second. But a slave who should be guilty of praying was to be whipped for every offense.

A complaint against him [Black Harry of St. Eustatius] was lodged with the governor, and he was cited before him to receive his sentence. His sentence was, that he should be publicly whipped; after which he was to be imprisoned for a given time, and when released, to be banished from the island.

Harry received his sentence with submissive meekness; and, as his crime was considered of a flagrant nature, he received a most unmerciful whipping. He bore the lacerations of the whip with Christian fortitude, and being remanded to prison, he remained in confinement the appointed time. At the close of this term he was secretly removed, but to what place his friends could not learn.

Many thought that his fate would remain an impenetrable secret until the sea should give up its dead. But in the year 1796, when Dr. Coke was in America, he saw Harry alive and free. He gave the following account of this interview with him:

"One evening, after preaching at a certain place, a black man followed me into my chamber, whom I immediately recognized to be Harry of St. Eustatius. He informed me that the ship in which he was transported from the island, brought a cargo of slaves to the continent, where he has since resided without being exposed to that brutality which he had suffered in former years. Through all these changes, and the lapse of time, he seemed to have retained his piety and his zeal. He is useful in the society of which he is a member, and in the prayer meetings. And thus an answer has been given from heaven to the petitions of many thousands in England, who at one time, with great fervor, spread his case before the Lord."

* * * * *

Part 2

"BLACK HARRY" HOSIER

I have compiled the following account using material from Abel Stevens, Nathan Bangs, and John Lednum. -- DVM

"Black Harry," (Harry Hosier) Asbury's traveling servant, was a notable character of that day. Asbury alludes to him, in 1780, as a suitable traveling companion to preach to the colored people. Asbury observed, "If I had Harry to go with me and meet the colored people, it would be attended with a blessing." This is the first time that we meet with the name of this individual, who, as we suppose, was the same Harry Hosier, who was so well known among the Methodists for about thirty years after this. We are ignorant of Harry's history previous to this date.

He was exceedingly popular in Philadelphia as a preacher. Dr. Rush, whose predilections for Methodist preaching are well known, did not disdain to hear him, and, making allowance for his illiteracy, (for he could not read,) pronounced him "the greatest orator in America." He was small in stature and had eyes of remarkable brilliancy and keenness, and singular readiness and aptness of speech. He traveled with Asbury, Coke, Whatcoat, and Garrettson.

He acted as servant, or "driver," for these eminent itinerants, but excelled them all in popularity as a preacher, sharing with them in their public services, not only in black, but in white congregations. When they were disabled by sickness or any other cause, they could trust the pulpit to Harry without fear of unfavorably disappointing the people. Asbury acknowledges that the best way to obtain a large congregation was to announce that Harry would preach; the multitude preferring him to the bishop himself.

"It has been said that on one occasion, in Wilmington, Del., where Methodism was long unpopular, a number of the citizens, who did not ordinarily attend Methodist preaching, came together to hear Bishop Asbury. Old Asbury chapel was, at that time, so full that they could not get in. They stood outside to hear the bishop, as they supposed, but in reality they heard Harry. Before they left the place, they complimented the speaker by saying: "If all Methodist preachers could preach like the bishop we should like to be constant hearers."

Someone present replied, "That was not the bishop but the bishop's servant." This only raised the bishop higher in their estimation; as their conclusion was, "if such be the servant, what must the master be?" The truth was, that Harry was a more popular speaker than Asbury, or almost any one else in his day.

The following quotations from Freeborn Garrettson's Journal or Autobiography during times when he was accompanied by Harry Hosier will reveal how powerful Black Harry's preaching was. The excerpts were taken from Bangs' biography of Garrettson:

"Having stayed a few days in the city, on Wednesday, June the 2d, accompanied by Harry who is to travel with me this summer..."

"Saturday 5th, we met in King Street: more people gathered than the house could contain, and I found great enlargement in speaking. Harry exhorted after me to the admiration of the people."

"Thursday 8th, many more came together at brother H.'s than could crowd into the house: we had a joyful season; my own spirit is filled with sweetness. The people of this circuit are amazingly fond of hearing Harry."

"Saturday 19th, I rode to Mr. Herrick's, where I preached in the afternoon. I had great freedom to preach from 'In hell he lifted up his eyes,' &c. Harry exhorted after me with much freedom."

"Wednesday 23d, I rode about twelve miles to Litchfield, and was surprised to find the doors of the Episcopal church open, and a large congregation waiting for me. I preached from, 'Enoch. walked with God,' and I believe good was done. I left Harry to preach another sermon, and went on to the center of the town; the bell rang, and I preached to a few in the Presbyterian meeting house, and lodged with a kind Churchman."

"28th, we set out for Boston, rode fifteen miles, stopped at Hartford, and preached in the court house to five or six hundred people, who seemed to give great heed to the words which were spoken: while Harry gave an exhortation some rude people behaved very uncivilly."

"Sunday 11th, with freedom I preached in the morning at six o'clock. I officiated all day for good Mr. Snow, and at six Harry preached in the meeting house to more than a thousand people."

"Sunday 25th, I preached in Canaan to about five hundred people, from Matt. xxv, 14, 15, the parable of the talents. The Lord was with us: the work in this place is moving on. I have circulated a subscription for the building of a church here. Brother Bloodgood was with me: as it was too warm in the house I preached in the open air. Harry preached after me with much applause. I rode in the afternoon and preached in Salisbury, in a part of the town in which I had never before preached, and I think I have never seen so tender a meeting in this town before, for a general weeping ran through the assembly, especially while Harry gave an exhortation. The Lord is carrying on a blessed work in this town."

"Wednesday, July 28th, I had sent on Harry to supply my afternoon's appointment."

"July 29th, I rode to Hudson, where I found the people very curious to hear Harry. I therefore declined preaching that their curiosity might be satisfied. The different denominations heard him with much admiration, and the Quakers thought that as he was unlearned he must preach by immediate inspiration."

In 1782, Mr. Asbury wished him to accompany him on his visit to the South; but Harry seemed unwilling to go. It was feared that the much flattery which was offered to him after his preaching might in the end be ruinous to him. He withstood for years the temptations of extraordinary popularity, but finally after he had moved on a tide of popularity for a number of years, he fell by wine, one of the strong enemies of both ministers and people. And now, alas! this

popular preacher was a drunken rag-picker in the streets of Philadelphia. But we will not leave him here.

One evening Harry started down the Neck, below Southwark, determined to remain there until his backslidings were healed. Under a tree he wrestled with God in prayer. Sometime that night God restored to him the joys of his salvation. From this time Harry continued faithful; though he could not stand before the people with that pleasing confidence, as a public speaker, that he had before his fall.

About the year 1810 Harry died in Philadelphia, and it is believed, made a good end. He was buried in a free burying ground in Kensington, having been borne to the grave by a great procession of both white and black admirers, who buried him as a hero, once overcome, but finally victorious.

* * * * *

THE END