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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM WATTERS
The First American-born Methodist Circuit Rider

A Digital Publication created
from the printed volume titled:

"A Short Account of the Christian Experience
and Ministerial Labors of William Watters"

Drawn Up By Himself

"Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." --
Psalm, 64, 16.

"Other men have laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." -- St. John, 4, 38.

Alexandria; Printed by S. Snowden

1806

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By Holiness Data Ministry

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WILLIAM WATTERS THE FIRST AMERICAN CIRCUIT RIDER

Compiled, edited, and arranged by Duane V. Maxey

A -- From The Cyclopedia Of Methodism By Matthew Simpson

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS DIGITAL EDITION

THIS DIGITAL PUBLICATION WAS MADE FROM A COSTLY AND RARE BOOK. -- This digital publication was created from a costly and rare book purchased by HDM for the sum of \$275, not including shipping. While I am not sure that it is the only such book extant in the world, if this is not the case, I think it quite possible that it is one of very few copies of the book. No publication date is given, but the Preface is dated: May 14, 1806. Thus, it was probably published some time near that date, making the volume today, September 14, 1998, 192 years and 4 months old. It seems remarkable that from this single, old 192-year-old volume, there may spring forth many copies of this digital publication that will spread forth to the farthest reaches of the globe. May the Lord bless its multiplying and distribution for the good of all who may read it, for the glory of God, and for the increase of the eternal reward of William Watters, First American-born Methodist Circuit Rider.

EDITING CHANGES IN THE TEXT:-- As shown above, I chose to use a different title for the digital edition of this work, -- one that would identify the contents of the work while being short enough to easily fit into our indexes. Besides this change, I have modernized various archaic spellings, such as: "burthen" to "burden" and "amongst" to "among". Also, in some places I have re-worded short portions of the text that were worded by the author in such a way as to make his meaning ambiguous, vague, or liable to mis-interpretation. In such re-wordings I have tried to set forth the author's intended meaning. In other instances, I have inserted [bracketed] words into the text in order to clarify the meaning. In order to help the reader readily and more easily note the various dates in Watters' Autobiography, I have placed notations of the dates between paragraphs. Finally, in some places I have inserted my comments into the text, which comments are also enclosed with brackets.

AN EARLIER COMPILATION ABOUT WILLIAM WATTERS IS APPENDED TO THIS DOCUMENT:-- Near the middle of June of 1996, I compiled material about William Watters and published it in our HDM Library as hdm0215.tex under the title: "William Watters, The First American Circuit Rider." I have appended that compilation to this publication. In order to better grasp the chronology of Watters' life, it might profitable for the reader to first read or browse this compilation before reading the autobiography.-- DVM

* * * * *

PREFACE

My dear Brethren,

You are here presented with a short and imperfect account of what the Lord has been doing for, and by me for thirty-five years past. None of you who know my abilities as a writer, will expect to find any thing in the following pages to attract your attention. I have as far as I know myself, written as I have lived and preached among you from the beginning, not seeking yours but you. God knows I never had any other end in view, in preaching to you the gospel of his grace. I have so far on my pilgrimage continued with you, and hope we shall never be parted in time nor in eternity.

I have no doubt but you will form different opinions on this little publication, and possibly some may wish it never had appeared. I can tell you that until some time past, I never intended during my life, that the world should be troubled with any thing of the kind. -- Although I have been particular in keeping an account of my experience and religious exercises, yet, until a few months past no one ever saw it. I was then visited by one of my particular friends, who asked me if I had any thing of the kind, and finding I had, insisted on seeing it, which for some time I evaded, but he persisted in his application till I could refuse no longer.

After drawing this obscure piece out of a drawer, where it had lain for years, (and where in all probability it would have remained until my death) through the solicitations of this friend and others, I determined to draw up a short account of what the Lord had done for me. I hope it will be made a blessing to poor sinners, into whose hands it may be thrown, and likewise that it may be of use to those traveling the same road or entering on the same work.

As I never preached for the money or the praise of men, so neither do I now write or publish for either. I intend the whole of the profits after defraying the expense of publishing, shall be applied to charitable purposes. The reader will no doubt observe in perusing the following work, that I have in some places attended more to the matter, than the order of time in which the occurrences took place; he will also find in some parts that I have only transcribed from my journal, or memorandum, while in others that I have made extracts, and collected the substance of what I had daily kept an account of.

I hope I need make no further apology for this work, than to say, if I could have written more to the purpose I would have done it, for I do assure you that I have no other design than to promote your salvation and the glory of God. Those who find these pages beneath their notice, will

treat them with silent contempt without injuring my feelings, while they may find many tracts on the same subject better adapted to their refined taste. I most sincerely beg an interest in the prayers of my brethren, and pray God to stretch forth his arm everywhere and save sinners -- bless his church composed of Christians of all denominations, and hasten the hour when we shall no longer have cause to say one to another know ye the Lord, but when all shall know him from the least to the greatest.

Fairfax, May 14, 1806

* * * * *

PART THE FIRST -- BIRTH OCTOBER 16, 1751 -- CONVERSION MAY, 1771

An account of myself from my infancy to my conversion to God, and my being fully satisfied of my call to the ministry.

* * *

01 -- BIRTH OCTOBER 16, 1751

I was born the 16th day of October, in the year of our Lord 1751 in Baltimore County, Maryland. My parents were members of the Church of England. My father was one of the vestry at the time he died, and from all that I can learn, for many years feared God and wrought righteousness beyond any of his day and neighborhood. He died when I was about two years old, leaving my mother and nine children (of whom I was the youngest) severely to feel the loss of so valuable a husband and father. He left us not rich; but in comfortable circumstances, and I believe, in faith and solemn prayer, he committed us to God, whose kind providence has been over us as a family to the present day. At a very early period I well remember to have been under serious impressions at various times; but was naturally vain, proud, self-willed, passionate and prone to evil as "the sparks are to fly upwards." Cursing, swearing, lying, and such like practices, were not allowed in my mother's family; and from my infancy I always found the greatest affection for her, as one of the best of parents; and if at any time I was sensible that I had grieved her in any degree, I never could be at rest till I had humbled myself and she had shown me tokens of forgiveness.

Living in the country I was not put to school till I was near seven years of age, when I found it a very great affliction to be so much from my mother, and made but little progress in learning for some time. At about eight or nine years of age I was greatly oppressed day after day with blasphemous thoughts to curse God, which would often make me shudder, and with all my might I would try to put away such troublesome thoughts out of my mind, but was not able, so that it was not uncommon for me at such times, in the utmost distress, inwardly to reply -- No -- No -- not for the world, but I would conclude that as God knew my heart, I had actually cursed him, as though I had spoken aloud, and that this was the unpardonable sin that our Saviour said should never be forgiven, which would greatly distress me, while I thought myself, at such times, one of the vilest sinners on earth, and was frequently afraid that all who saw me would know how wicked I was. At other times I was much terrified with thoughts of death, and the torments of hell; though it was a very rare thing I ever heard anyone say a word on those momentous subjects.

As I grew older I was more and more engaged in seeking death in the error of my ways, and by the time I was twelve or fourteen, I took great delight in dancing, in card playing, in attending horse racing, and such like pernicious practices, though often terrified with the thoughts of eternity in the midst of them, which would frequently so damp all my momentary joys that I would feel very miserable indeed. Thus did my precious time roll around, while I was held in the chains of my sins, too often a willing captive of the devil. I had no one to tell me the evil of sin, or to teach me the way of life and salvation. The two ministers in the two parishes, with whom I was acquainted, were both immoral men, and had no gifts for the ministry; if they received their salary they appeared to think but little about the souls of the people. The blind were evidently leading the blind, and it was the mere mercy of God, that we did not all fall into Hell together.

My corrupt and fallen nature, like a strong and fertile soil, was, as I grew up, continually producing its plentiful crops of evil, and was far too strong for the poor barrier of a moral education, which was all that I ever had, while sin had the dominion over every order of men in my knowledge. At sixteen or seventeen I began to think of affecting the man, and of course took still greater liberties of gratifying my vain and youthful desires: so that often God was not in all my thoughts -- I was, of a truth, without God and without a Christian hope in the world, though called one of the most modest youths in the neighborhood, and thought by them, (as blind as myself) to be a very good Christian. It was my constant practice to attend the Church with my prayer book, and often read my Bible and other good books, and sometimes attempted to say my prayers in private, but frequently not till I had got into my bed, when I too often fell asleep before I had even repeated the Lord's prayer.

Many times when I had been sinning against God, I felt much inward uneasiness, and often, on reflection, felt a hell within, till I could invent something to divert my mind from such reflections. It is thought that many, sin without present remorse; this may be the case by long habits in sin, and frequently grieving the Spirit in his operations; but I am well assured it was not the case with me, as far as I knew good from evil. Hence, strange as it may appear, I have left the dancing room to pray to God that he might not be offended with me, and have then returned to it again with as much delight as ever.

For a year before I desisted from the Devil's service, I saw so plainly I was in the way to hell, that I was often driven to make great promises to do better, and thought I would give the world (if mine) that I could overcome every sin. And when my corruptions would betray me into secret but most crying evils, I have been at various times on the very point of taking my Bible, and in the most solemn manner swearing that I would never be guilty of the like again, and nothing kept me from so doing, but a fear that even then I should break through, and that there would remain no more mercy for such a poor wretch, who had added perjury to the black list of his innumerable offenses.

* * *

Some time in July, 1770, I had frequent opportunities of hearing the Methodists preach in the neighborhood where I was brought up, but could not conceive what they meant by saying, we must be born again, and, though I thought but little of all I heard for some time, yet dared not despise and revile them as many then did. By frequently being in company with several of my old acquaintances, who had embraced and professed Methodism, among whom was my eldest brother and his wife, (who I thought equal to any religious people in the world) and hearing them all declare as with one voice, that they knew nothing of heart religion, the religion of the Bible, till since [after] they heard the Methodists preach, utterly confounded me; and I could but say with Nicodemus, "How can these things be"?

While I was marveling and wondering at these unheard of things that those strange people were spreading wherever they came, before I was aware, I found my heart inclined to forsake many of my vain practices. The last place of merriment I ever was at, I remember well I was hardly even a looker on -- so vain and ridiculous did all their expressions of mirth appear to me, as did also their dancing, which I was formerly so fond of, so that now no arguments could prevail on me to be seen on the floor. Though I ought not to have gone to this ball, yet I had not that degree of the fear of God to leave the place as I might have done. Being on a visit at a near relations, I knew of its being intended.*

[*In the above remarks, William Watters was apparently saying that he knew in advance the dance was to be held at his near relatives; and thus he could have avoided being there when the dance was held, but, because he feared God too little, he stayed for the dance. I suspect that he may have been coaxed by his relatives to stay, in spite of his inward persuasion that he should leave before the dance began. -- DVM]

Yet I had my reflections, though I was on the Devil's ground, and among others. While I was looking at a young man of property who was beastly drunk, and scarcely able to sit in his chair, a dog passed by, and I deliberately thought I would rather be that dog than a drunkard. Some, even, of my friends began to fear that I should become a Methodist, but I had no such thought, and yet I often found my poor evil heart drawn to them as a people that lived in a manner I never had known any to live before. Still through the pride of my vain heart, too often I disputed with them when present; yet could not hear any person speak against them behind their backs without taking their part.

The winter after this I had several very alarming dreams, and the divine Spirit did, both with and without means, mightily strive with me, a poor sinner, so that I saw plainer than ever the heinous nature of sin, and of course the want of Jesus Christ as a present Saviour. I began to delight in the company of the pious, and shunned the company of others. I read my Bible with seriousness and attention, and began to be uniform and earnest in private prayer, and gladly embraced every opportunity of hearing God's word declared without regarding by what denomination, and for several months lived outwardly as a Christian, and the last month before I was fully convinced of my real state by nature and practice, I seldom, if ever, omitted bowing my sinful knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, four or five times a day. And though I was a Pharisee all this while, seeking to be justified by the deeds of the Law, by trusting more or less in the performance of those duties, yet God knows I was sincere in all that I did, and the Lord be praised, who did not let me continue to build on a sandy foundation.

It was daily my prayer that God would teach me the way of life and salvation, and not suffer me to be deceived. After being uncommonly uneasy for several days concerning the state of my soul, I went with my eldest brother and family to a prayer meeting in his neighborhood, it being on a Sabbath day; and while one was at prayer I saw a man near me who I knew to be a poor sinner, trembling, weeping and praying, as though his all depended on the present moment. His soul and body were in an agony. -- Mercy -- Mercy for Christ's sake, was the burden of his cry. The gracious Lord who works by what means he pleases blessed this circumstance greatly to my conviction; so that I felt in a manner which I have not words fully to express, that I must be internally changed -- that I must be born again, born of the Spirit or never see the face of God in Glory. Without this I was deeply sensible that all I had done, or could do, was vain, and of no account, if not done as the Lord had appointed, in order to obtain this divine change, this new nature. I went home much distressed, and fully determined by the grace of God to seek the salvation of my soul with my whole heart, and never rest till I knew the Lord had blotted out my sins, and shed his love abroad in my heart, by the Holy Ghost.

In this frame of mind I soon got by myself, and fell upon my knees before my merciful God, who had spared me through a life of sin and ingratitude. But oh! -- alas! my heart, my sinful heart felt as a rock -- and although I believed myself in the "gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity," and of course, that if I died in that state I must die eternally; yet I could not shed one tear, neither could I find words to express my wretchedness before my merciful high priest. I could only bemoan my forlorn state, and wandered about through the afternoon in solitary places, seeking rest, but found none.

I returned in the evening to the neighbors where we had been for the public worship above mentioned, and several coming in joined in prayer, and the Lord again smote my rocky heart, and caused it to gush out with penitential sorrow for my many sins against Him who has so "loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." I was so melted down, and blessed with such a praying heart, that I would have been glad if they had continued on their knees all night in prayer for me, a poor helpless wretch. My concern was such, that I feared lying down or closing my eyes, lest I should open them in hell.

The following day I was unfit for any worldly business, and spent that day mostly in private, while Christ on the cross bleeding, and bearing the sins of the whole world in his own body, and dying to make a full atonement for the chief of sinners, that they might not die eternally, was continually before the eyes of my mind; while in the most bitter manner did my soul exclaim, Oh! how have I slighted the bleeding Saviour, and trampled his most precious blood under my unhallowed feet, and have done despite to the Spirit of grace. The thoughts and sight thereof, now through divine mercy made my eyes to run down with tears, while my very heart was ready to burst asunder with sorrow. Thus was I bowed down and determined to wait at the foot of the cross, while I was stripped of all dependence in outward things, and was well assured that there was "no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

I had no good word or deed, in which I could any longer trust for righteousness, in whole or in part. I saw in a manner which no words can fully express, that I was a sinner -- the chief of

sinner -- condemned by the law and worthy of death eternal; and that it was a mercy of mercies, that I was not dead and damned. In this most deplorable state, my sins were a burden too heavy to be borne. I refused to be comforted, but by the Friend of sinners. My cry was day and night, save Lord or I perish. Give me Christ or else I die -- I die eternally. In this state I loved nothing better than weeping, mourning and prayer, it was more than my meat and drink day and night, humbly hoping, waiting, and longing for the coming of the Lord to pluck me as a brand from the everlasting burnings, and to save me with a present salvation.

O My God! How little did the world and all in it appear, and how truly did I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. O wretched sinner that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death. Oh, my wicked heart and life! Though my God has called -- often called, I have refused, and now thou mayest justly laugh at my calamity, and leave me to a tempting devil, whom I have too long willingly obeyed. But in the midst of deserved wrath, remember mercy, was under every discouragement, the exclamation and prayer of my guilty soul.

In the evening of this day also, I had the happiness of meeting with a few praying people. There were two persons who were in my condition. Convinced lost sinners, who had also been day and night seeking the Lord Jesus sorrowing. The few present, who knew the Lord felt for us, and manifested a travailing spirit. They wrestled with, and cried to God in earnest prayer for our salvation, and were not a little comforted in being answered in the deliverance of one out of three; who, when we arose from our knees, rejoiced and testified that the Lord had blessed him with pardon and peace. I was greatly affected to hear him praise God and tell of his love. He kindly exhorted me to be engaged, and not to doubt but the Lord would be found by all who sincerely sought him in every place. Oh! how did my anxious heart long and pant for the blessing, but I was bound down fast in the chains and fetters of my sins and unbelief.

Tuesday. -- This was the third day since I had seen the want of pardoning mercy, and was spent mostly in the solitary woods alone, sometimes on my knees, and sometimes on my face, prostrate before the Lord, while my "head was as waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears." -- I could not bear to have one word spoken to me, or even to think of anything, but the "one thing needful." For three days and nights eating, drinking, and sleeping, in a measure, fled from me, while my flesh wasted away and my strength failed me in such a manner that I found it was not without cause that it is asked -- But a wounded spirit who can bear?

Various were the thoughts that passed and re-passed my wounded mind during the night of my humiliation, and poverty of spirit. I sometimes thought that I could do no more, and for a moment feared that my state was desperate, that the day of grace was past to return no more, but never felt one desire for my sorrows to abate for one moment, till I obtained mercy; or if that could not be, if it was too late, and the Heavens were to remain as brass to my cries, my determination was to go mourning down to my grave, and in Hell I was sure I should clear God of willing my damnation. My God! how little do sinners know what they are doing, while resisting the Holy Spirit, and refusing to have Christ to reign over them.

Being returned in the afternoon from the woods, and having retired into my chamber, my eldest brother (at whose house I was), knowing my distress, entered my room with all the

sympathy of a brother and a Christian. To my great astonishment he informed me that God had that day blessed him with his pardoning love, and expressed being very happy in the Lord. I expected that he had long known this; but he had been so moral and possessed so much of the form of religion that he found it hard to come as a sinner stripped of all to the Lord Jesus. So true are the words of him that spake as never man spake -- "The whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick." After giving me all the advice in his power, he kneeled down with me, and with a low, soft voice (which was frequently interrupted by tears) offered up a fervent prayer to God for my present salvation. He concluded all by repeating from the poet the following words, which were more blessed to my encouragement than any thing which had been said to me since my conviction:--

For sorrow and sadness, we joy shall receive,
And share in the gladness of all that believe.

For the most part I had a gleam of hope that God, in some distant time, would be gracious, and that I should yet praise him in the land of the living; and for a short space I had such a glorious prospect of future happiness, that all my troubles became sweetened with the lively hope that they would soon end in a happy knowledge of the Kingdom of God in the world, and a preparation for happiness hereafter. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." It is repeated not less than six or seven times in the four gospels: "They that humble themselves shall be exalted, but they that exalt themselves shall be abased."

* * *

03 -- CONVERSION -- MAY, 1771

On Wednesday several praying persons, who knew my distress, came to visit me, and after some conversation, I desired they would pray for me. The family was called in, though it was about the middle of the day, and J. P___y gave out the following hymn:

"Give to the wind thy fears,
Hope and be undismayed;
God hears thy sighs, and counts thy tears,
God shall lift up thy head:
Through waves, and clouds, and storms,
He gently clears thy way:
Wait thou his time, so shall this night,
Soon end in joyous day.

"Still heavy is thy heart,
Still sinks thy spirit down,
Cast off thy weight, bid fear depart,
And every care be gone:
What though thou rulest not,
Yet Heaven, and Earth, and Hell,

Proclaim, God setteth on the throne,
And ruleth all things well." &c.

While they all joined in singing, my face was turned to the wall with my eyes lifted upwards in a flood of tears, feeling a lively hope that the Lord, whom I sought, would "suddenly come to his temple." The hymn was well adapted to my state. My good friends sang with the Spirit, and in faith. The Lord heard, and appeared spiritually in the midst. A divine light beamed through my inmost soul, which in a few minutes encircled me around, surpassing the brightness of the noon-day sun. This divine glory, with the holy glow that I felt within my soul, I feel still as distinct an idea of, as that I ever saw the light of the natural sun, or any impression of my mind, but know not how fully to express myself, so as to be understood by those who are in a state of nature, inexperienced in the things of God: for the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.

My burden was gone -- my sorrow fled -- my soul and all that was within me rejoiced in hopes of the glory of God: while I beheld such fullness and willingness in the Lord Jesus to save lost sinners, and my soul so rested on him, that I could now for the first time call Jesus Christ, Lord, by the Holy Ghost given unto me." -- The hymn being concluded we all fell upon our knees, but my prayers were all turned into praises. A supernatural power penetrated every faculty of my soul and body, and the words of the prophet were literally fulfilled in my conversion to God. "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Such was the change, and so undeniable to all present that they appeared greatly affected and confident that the Lord had descended in the power of his Spirit, and wrought a glorious work in the "presence of them all." My two good friends greatly interested in my happiness, caught me in their arms, rejoicing over me as a father over a returning son -- "Who was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found."

This had a happy effect on one of my brothers, a young man who happened to come in just as we were going to prayers, and though careless about his own soul's salvation, had been waiting with anxious expectation during my deep distress to see what the event would be. -- He was cut to the heart and humbled to the dust, while all his objections and doubts respecting experimental religion fled as smoke before the wind, and through the grace of God he from that hour set out to seek the Lord in earnest, and through infinite mercy soon obtained the same blessing, and to this day continues to evidence his faith by his works.

So sensible was my change from darkness to light -- from death to life -- from the Devil and sin to Christ and grace, that I felt the importance of our Saviour's assertion -- "My Kingdom is within you" -- And that of St. Paul's -- "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." My new-born soul breathed the language of the evangelical Prophet -- "O Lord I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. -- When I went out (strange and enthusiastic as it may appear to those who have not experienced any thing of the sort) the heavens over me, the earth with all around me, spake in a powerful, though silent, language to my calm mind, while all appeared to stand in quite a new relation to me.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." No doubt in his works -- in His ordinances -- in his providences -- and finally, without a dimming veil to praise and enjoy Him forever. My cup was full, though small, and my soul happy day and night in God my Saviour. I had but one desire upon earth, which was, to be wholly the Lord's in time and in eternity.

This memorable change took place in May, 1771, in the twentieth year of my age. In the same house (not the same room) where I was born a child of wrath, I was also born a child of grace. My God! may I always be sensible of the infinite obligations I am under to thee my Almighty Saviour, who hath brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. -- And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. Many shall see it and fear and trust in the Lord.

Having never met with, or heard of any other people who preached up or professed to know anything of what I now enjoyed -- I knew not whether there were any, and doubt this day whether there are any (as a sect) who enjoy experimental religion in its native life and power, as the Methodists do. I had never been at a class meeting, nor had I intended ever to become a member among them, till within a few days; [apparently meaning: "till within a few days" of his conversion -- DVM] although I had for several months felt a very great attachment to them, believing they were a people much devoted to God; but now having obtained mercy I felt no hesitation in owning the people that God had owned in my conversion, and gladly attended one of their meetings the same day, and thought it a greater blessing to be received a member among them than to be made a prince.

My conversion was (in that dark day and place) much talked of, as also my praying in a short time after without a book, which, to some, appeared a proof that there was a notable miracle wrought on me indeed.

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04 -- SUMMER OF 1771

The most of the following summer I was under the disagreeable necessity of being mostly among those who knew but little about religion; but through grace nothing discouraged me. I had listed during the war -- [Watters' meaning in the preceding remark is obscure. Perhaps he meant that he had knowingly "enlisted" in God's army during a time of spiritual war, and thus expecting a battle, he was not discouraged when he found himself in one. -- DVM] -- My eye was single -- I had but one end in living in every place and at all times. We had no regular preaching in those days, nor had there ever been but three Methodist preachers in Maryland, [Robert] Williams, [Robert] Strawbridge and [John] King, so that we were frequently for months with very little preaching, and then for weeks we had it frequently, but in one sense we were all preachers.

The visible change that sinners could not but see, and many openly acknowledged, was a means of bringing them to seek the Lord. On the Lord's day we commonly divided into little bands, and went out into different neighborhoods, wherever there was a door open to receive us; two, three, or four in company, and would sing our hymns, pray, read, talk to the people, and some soon began to add a word of exhortation. We were weak, but we lived in a dark clay, and the Lord

greatly owned our labors for though we were not full of wisdom, we were blessed with a good degree of faith and power.

The little flock was of one heart and mind, and the Lord spread the leaven of his grace from heart to heart, from house to house, and from one neighborhood to another, and though our gifts were small; yet was it astonishing to see how rapidly the work spread all around, bearing down the little oppositions with which it met, as chaff before the wind. Many will praise God forever, for our prayer meetings. In many neighborhoods they soon became respectable, and were considerably attended to.

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05 -- FALL OF 1771

In the latter end of the fall following, my second brother opened his door to receive preaching. He was a very moral man, a strict churchman, and one of the vestry; so that I had my fears it would be a hard matter for him to sell all, and follow Christ. For the salvation of none of my relations (excepting my mother) did I feel a greater desire than for his, who in many instances had been as a father to me. It was not long before the words of the Lord had a good effect on him, and several others in his neighborhood, so that we soon raised a small class, and I was appointed their leader, as I had removed to my brother's in part for that purpose. We met for some time -- but as there was only one more who knew the Lord, and he not able often to give his attendance, I found hard toiling, having but little help, and seeing but little fruit, which to me, was exceedingly discouraging.

Fearing that our little meeting would come to nothing. I was led to plead earnestly with the Lord for their salvation, and could say I had a travailing spirit for them. I was answered beyond my expectations. The work began as I was praying in my brother's family. He was blessed powerfully with a sense of all his sins forgiven, and the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him. He could not be content to eat his morsel alone, but, in the language of the Psalmist, cried to his brethren, come hither all ye that fear the Lord and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul. None doubted his experience. Several of them were very much alarmed and led to cry earnestly to the Lord for mercy. Our meetings, both private and public, became lively and well attended to, and one and another were daily obtaining the blessing [of regeneration], and for several weeks I could do little more than attend to our meetings and the families that were setting out for the kingdom. I often found great enlargement of heart for the salvation of my fellow creatures, and considerable assistance in striving in my weak way for their reformation.

It is, I hope, with the greatest gratitude that I here record the infinite goodness of an all gracious God to my brothers and sisters. There were nine of us that had arrived to mature age, seven brothers and two sisters, and in less than nine months all professed to know the Lord. Four out of the nine are since dead, but continued in the ways of religious duties and in fellowship with the Methodists to their last. Those who yet remain are through grace, I trust, all following on to apprehend that for when they also were apprehended of Christ Jesus. For many years there were but few of the children of the above mentioned that embraced religion, thought they were generally

moral and well disposed; but, a few years past, the Lord converted many of them, and it gives me great cause of thankfulness that so far they appear to be treading in the steps of their parents, and I hope they will be found filling up their places in the Church of Christ, while they shall be joining the Church triumphant above.

From my first finding peace with God, I found my mind much affected with a sense of the danger poor sinners were in. My heart was drawn out with fervent desires and prayer for their salvation, and from time to time I have thought that nothing was so near or dear but what I would willingly part with to be an instrument of spreading the glorious gospel through the earth. I did not think it possible that I should ever be able to contribute anything towards this desirable end in a public way; but I found that God had indisputably owned and blessed my feeble endeavors in the conversion of several in different neighborhoods. The hearts of the people were open to receive me, and many were inviting me into their neighborhoods and houses, and above all, I felt a continual conviction on my mind that this was the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning me.

Fasting and praying I sought the direction of the Lord in so important a matter, and was led in the most unreserved manner I was capable of to give myself up to be disposed of as his infinite wisdom should see best. These convictions were greatly revived during the late revival in our neighborhood, and caused me often to examine myself upon the occasion; and it was my deliberate opinion that if I ever was a preacher I must be one of the Lord's own making, as my natural and acquired abilities forbid any thoughts of the kind. With God all things are possible. He can open the mouth of a dumb ass to speak in honor of his name. My God! show me thy will and stand by me to the end, and then I fear no consequences:-- prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, life or death -- all is well, coming from thy gracious hands.

I began with fear and trembling once in a while to give a few words of exhortation, but frequently was afraid of running before I was sent, and [afraid of] taking too much upon myself, and that the Judge of the quick and dead would ask who hath required this at thy hands? Yet, the divine comfort I found in speaking to and inviting precious souls to seek the Lord! The effect the word frequently had on both saint and sinner, greatly encouraged me to go on in my weak, stammering way. At other times when I have felt little or no liberty in speaking, and seen no apparent fruit, I have been much dejected, and frequently at such times have thought, Lord, I can speak no more in thy name -- I am too unworthy -- I am too ignorant -- I am too unfaithful. -- O! Send them that are better qualified for so important a work, and not such a poor worm as I am. Yet the word of the Lord would be as fire in my bones, and I dare not refrain from declaring his loving kindness to sinners; and, although I have often shuddered at the thoughts of being self-sent, yet have I much oftener trembled, lest by my backwardness and unfaithfulness in warning sinners, they should die in their sins, and their blood be required at my hands.

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PART SECOND -- 1772 -- 1776

An account of my exercises and ministerial labors from my call to the ministry in 1772 to 1776, including about four years.

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06 -- ENTERED THE ITINERANT MINISTRY -- OCTOBER 1772

Being finally fully persuaded of my call to the ministry; and that it was my duty to go wherever a kind and unerring Providence should point out my way, I cheerfully accepted the invitation of that pious servant of the Lord, Robert Williams, and set out with him, and under his care in October, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-two [October, 1772], for Norfolk, in Virginia, being just twenty-one years of age, having known the Lord seventeen months, and been exhorting about five or six.

A little before I set out, my mother lost her second husband, and her very great fondness for me, made the thoughts of parting with me, more than she could well bear. Though my affection for her remained unimpaired, in vain did she offer me all her worldly possessions never to leave her. I knew my brothers were dutiful children, and that each of them would pay the utmost attention to her, and through grace, I knew also, [Him] who, on a similar occasion said, "Let the dead bury the dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

At the parting with my friends many of them wept and hung around me; but I found such resignation, and so clear a conviction that my way was of the Lord, that I was enabled to commit them and myself to the care of our heavenly father in humble confidence, that if we never met again in this vale of tears, we should soon meet "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are forever at rest." Calling at one of my brother's on my way to take my leave of them, at our parting my fortitude seemed all banished, and I was so exceedingly affected, it was with the greatest difficulty I could find any utterance to commit them in prayer to the Divine protection. O! for a continual preparation to meet where all tears shall be wiped away. -- Even so Lord Jesus. -- Amen.

We held several meetings in different places before we left the county, and spent the following Sabbath in Baltimore town, where I attempted to preach, it being the third time of my speaking from a text. Monday morning we set out early, but only reached Bladensburgh. The landlord was exceedingly attentive to us, and received a word of exhortation with apparent thankfulness; but appeared utterly a stranger to heart religion.

Tuesday, we stopped in Georgetown, and at a private house, the father to one of our friends late from Philadelphia.

At night Mr. Williams preached to a large room full of the inhabitants who gave some attention to the things that were said, and behaved with decency. Wednesday we crossed the Potomac into Virginia, and I began to think myself far from home; yet felt no wish to be back. We passed through Alexandria, where we halted a few minutes in search of a young man formerly of our society in Philadelphia. We found him; but to our grief he had returned back to Egypt, yet he appeared glad to see us, and pressed us to tarry a while with him. We declined and continued on our way.

We continued our route through the week, lodging at taverns [inns] every night, till on Saturday noon we reached King William Court House, where we were invited by a Mr. Martin to lodge, and to preach the following day. We found Mrs. Martin under some awakenings, and endeavored to advise and encourage her. Mr. Williams preached in the forenoon, and at the court house in the afternoon. The congregations, considering they had but a few hours notice, were tolerably large, and behaved well; but we discovered great ignorance of experimental religion. A gentleman, a near neighbor, kindly invited us to lodge with him, and behaved to us with all the hospitality of a Virginian.

Mr. Williams preached several times after this on our way, and made it a point to introduce religious conversation at every convenient opportunity as we rode, sat by the fire side in taverns, and in private houses; but alas! we found very few in the course of three hundred miles who knew, experimentally, anything of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the power of his grace: so that still the prophet's assertion is a lamentable truth:-- "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." O my God! raise up and send these poor lost sheep in the wilderness, pastors after thine own heart, who shall gather them into thy fold, and feed them with the sincere milk of thy word, was daily my prayer, while I beheld their forlorn condition with bitterness of soul and with weeping eyes.

Weary, and much worn down, we at length arrived safe at our journey's end. Our friends in Norfolk received us kindly, but I found very little satisfaction among them for some time. Their convictions were slight, and their desires very faint, and far the greater part of them could hardly be said to have the form of religion. Such Methodists I never had seen, nor did I suppose there were such upon earth. My experience and warm feelings led me to conclude that all who bore the name [Methodist] must be like those with whom I had been acquainted in the neighborhood I had left. Many hundreds attended preaching, but were the most hardened, wild, and ill-behaved of any people I had ever beheld in any place.

The prospect in Portsmouth I thought better; but the real work in both places was superficial indeed. In a few weeks I left the town and went into the country to form (if possible) a small circuit; but was soon much discouraged to see the stupid blindness, and the brutal wickedness of the people. My exercises of mind for the salvation of my fellow creatures were very weighty, and often bowed me down with heart distress; yet I met with little open opposition, and in general was treated with respect. My soul longed day and night to see the words of the Lord sinking deep into the hearts of the people: and until that was the case, I could but mourn and give myself to fasting and prayer. In a few places I met with some little encouragement, and a few faithful, though afflicted, friends with whom I often took sweet counsel. My good friend William Owen, though a man of a sorrowful spirit and a very doubtful mind, was one of my great confidants, and often refreshed my spirits. His house was at all times a home for me while in a distant country.

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07 -- WINTER OF 1772-1773

In the latter part of the winter Mr. Joseph Pilmoor* left Norfolk for a few months, and traveled as far as Charleston. I was very incapable of filling his place during his absence, and

much rejoiced when he came back. As he returned through Portsmouth two men, well-dressed, at the ferry, were swearing most horridly. He lifted up his hands, and with a stern voice exclaimed aloud -- "Well! if I had been brought to this place blindfolded I should have known I was near Norfolk."

[*I filled in the names to the initials and partial blank here -- "J. P___e" -- as standing for: "Joseph Pilmoor". The correctness of this is borne out by other M. E. histories. Watters evidently spelled the last name "Pilmore," as some have, but the correct spelling seems to have been "Pilmoor". In the instance below, also noted by an asterisk, the name has also been filled in where Watters used only the initial. -- DVM]

The Parish minister of Norfolk undertook, in a sermon, to present us as a set of enthusiasts and deceivers. His text, for this noble purpose was, "Be not overmuch righteous." Among other things he told his people (what none of them would have otherwise suspected) that he knew from experience the evil of being over righteous. He said so much that his friends were dissatisfied. I suppose he thought that Mr. Pilmoor* was gone to return no more. But he found his mistake, for he returned in a few days after, and gave public notice that on such a day and hour he would preach to them from "Be not overmuch wicked," the words following the Parson's.

On the hour appointed the town appeared in motion, and came out in crowds. After reading his text, he informed his congregation why he had given them the notice of his intending to preach from these words, and why he had made choice of them in particular. That he had been creditably informed that a certain divine of that town had given the citizens thereof a solemn caution against being overmuch righteous. Lifting up his hands with a very significant countenance, he exclaimed, and in 'Norfolk' he hath given this caution. The conduct of the parson looked (as it certainly was) contemptible. Though these were severe reproofs, and from one capable of forming a sound judgment, yet Norfolk, continued Norfolk, as long as I knew any thing about it: and it was no ways strange to me that in a few years after it was consumed by fire.

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08 -- SPRING OF 1773

The spring following I was taken with the measles, and preaching several times with them on me till I perspired freely. I took cold, and in a few days was confined to my bed for a considerable time. I was thought to be in some danger, but in a few weeks was so far restored that I began to travel around my little Circuit. As I gathered strength, I got a little more fortitude to withstand the difficulties which attended my wandering life, and to my inexpressible consolation, several both in town and country were brought to know the Lord, which gave a fresh spring to my feeble endeavors. I felt liberty and power to speak the words of eternal life, which ["which" here apparently meaning: "in such a manner as"] I had not done since I came into these parts, and often resolved to be more faithful in the important work, and to labor while it was called to day.

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09 -- JUNE, 1773 -- FIRST METHODIST CONFERENCE IN AMERICA

In June, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-three, was held in Philadelphia, the first Methodist conference in America, which consisted of eight preachers, all Europeans; to whom were added A. W., [Abraham Whitworth] an Englishman by birth, and myself. I felt I was unworthy of a name and place among the servants of God, and trembled lest I should disgrace that cause, which I felt such inexpressible desires to promote. It was my earnest prayer that God would raise up and thrust out many of my countrymen into the same work -- for lo! the harvest is great but the laborers are few. But little did I ever think to see the hundreds that have since been employed in this glorious cause, and now began humbly to hope that they were as a few drops before a great rain. My God! the residue of the spirit is with thee. O! bow the whole world so thy sway, till "all flesh shall see thy salvation."

For several months I was very much affected, with a deep sense, not only of my unfaithfulness but more especially of the many evils of my unsanctified nature and daily imperfections before a holy God. At no period since I first knew the Lord, had I found such opposition from the carnal, mind (the remains of indwelling sin) -- I felt while under the power of these convictions, my life a continual warfare, and myself a poor pilgrim in a strange land, as it respected my case, and my own spiritual advantage. I felt the loss of my dear friends, and often the comforts of life that I might have enjoyed among them. But, O! if I could be an instrument in the hands of the Lord Jesus, in bringing dear souls to know him, whom to know is life eternal, it would more than compensate for all my little sufferings in this life, which are but momentary. My God! enable me to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

* * *

10 -- AUGUST, 1773

About the first of August, a little before I intended setting off home, I was taken with the nervous fever, and lay dangerously ill between twenty and thirty days, before there was any visible alteration. I expected to die, and though eternity had a very awful appearance indeed, yet through grace I knew in whom I had believed. My good friends, in Portsmouth, (where I lay) were very attentive to me in all my affliction, and did everything in their power for me. I often requested those who sat by me at night, to sit in the next room, and leave me in the dark alone, that I might meditate and pray without interruption. Part of the time I was bereft of my senses, and uttered things of which I knew nothing, but was frequently told that my random talk was generally upon something of a religious nature. Among other things I was told in the morning, that I repeated (the over night [during the night] in a solemn manner, which very much affected those watching by me) the following verse of one of our hymns:*

[*The words of the hymn below, taken literally, teach the false concept of being saved "in" sin rather than the truth of being saved "from" sin. And, while they reflected Watters' genuine inner sense of his unworthiness, they could not have reflected his true state as a saved man -- that of being saved "from" sin. See the first verse below: In actuality, one cannot be "a wretch undone and lost" and at the same time be "freely saved by grace." Such hymns, whoever wrote them, and regardless of the spirit in which they may be sung, are misleading. I take Watters' unconscious

repeating of this hymn during his sleep as an expression of his genuine, and commendable, humility before God, but not as an expression of his actual state. -- DVM]

"Let the world their virtue boast,
Their works of righteousness:
I, a wretch undone and lost,
Am freely saved by grace;

Other title I disclaim,
This, only this, is all my plea,
I, the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

I had not the least remembrance of expressing any such words, but, through the mercy of God, felt them to be the sentiments and language of my heart.

Although I dared not choose life or death, yet several reasons through the forepart of my illness led me to wish, if consistent with divine wisdom, I might be spared:--1st. To return home to my mother and friends, who I knew would be much afflicted at my dying [away] from them. 2d. I was the first American who had gone out among the Methodists to preach the gospel: and I thought it might discourage others. But above every other reason I thirsted to be more holy, to preach the blessed Jesus, and warn poor sinners of their danger, which was ever before my eyes. The Lord knew that I saw nothing else which was worth living for. Through the latter part of my illness I had little or no hopes of recovering, and was through grace resigned to my lot, well knowing divine wisdom could not err.

When the hopes of all around me failed, I began, to their admiration, to mend, though but very slowly for a considerable time. When I got so that I could walk about the room and pray in the family my poor heart was from day to day filled with gratitude and praise to my most merciful God and Saviour, who had made my bed in all my afflictions, and I did most earnestly pray that he would sanctify every twig of his Fatherly rod. O! what inexpressible desires did I feel to devote the remnant of my days to the honor of the most high God, who had done great things for such a poor worm.

Soon after Mr. Williams returned from Petersburg and the adjacent country, where he had been preaching for several months with great success, and was the first Methodist preacher that had ever been in those parts. Mr. Jarratt and Mr. Roberts both received him with open arms, and bid him a hearty welcome to their parishes.

A few days after Mr. Williams returned we left Norfolk (the most wicked place I had ever set my foot in) and sailed up to Baltimore, where we spent the following Sabbath, preaching both in town and at the Point to considerable congregations, with apparent encouragement. Here one of my brothers met me with a horse, and I returned home, after being away eleven months; and, through a merciful and kind Providence, found all my relations and friends in health, holding fast their professions, and growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. O merciful God! bring us all in safety to thy Kingdom above -- may not one of us be wanting.

Here I met with Mr. A____y [probably Francis Asbury] at my good friend's G. P____y's, which was the first time I ever saw him. We rode afterwards in company for some miles. He made particular inquiry about the parts I had been in, as well as the preachers who had preceded and succeeded me there.

Having recovered my health and strength, and being in the midst of my relations, blessed with all things necessary for life and godliness, I was often beset with a light, trifling spirit, and was taught by experience, as well as by the word of truth, that lightness and trifling persisted in would as effectually destroy the life of God out of the soul as open sin, though not so suddenly. I am of opinion that those who unhappily fall off from God, are prepared for greater sins, by first giving way to smaller ones, both of omission and commission, and that he who does not observe little things, will sooner or later fall by little and by little.

During my stay at home I first met with Mr. Rankin at one of my brother's. He preached and I was much pleased with him. He continued to show me every mark of his particular esteem to the end of his stay in America. I always thought him qualified to fill his place as general assistant among us, notwithstanding his particularities. He was not only a man of grace, but of strong and quick parts.

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11 -- NOVEMBER, 1773 -- KENT CIRCUIT

In November, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-three, I again left home for the second time, being appointed for Kent Circuit, on the Eastern shore of Maryland. On my way thither I felt a humiliating sense of my littleness of faith, and my unprofitableness in the Lord's vineyard; and from my inmost soul determined and promised the Lord, that I would set out afresh both to live and preach the gospel, and through infinite mercy I felt a divine evidence within that He would be with me, and bring me to the people to whom I was going, "in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of peace."

In this circuit which was two weeks [meaning that it required two weeks to complete the circuit], and the only one then between the two bays. I continued four or five months with much greater freedom, liberty and success in preaching, than ever, at any time since I had traveled. Many in different places attended our meetings, and I had one invitation after another into new neighborhoods. I had invitations to preach in several new places, and among the rest, at a Mr. Fogwell's in Queen Ann, who had long been under the dominion of strong drink, but by the means of a pious woman, who had been in the neighborhood opened his door for preaching. I went, but to my surprise the minister of the Parish (Mr. Cain) met me there, and as the house was not licensed for preaching, according to the English law then existing, which required this of all dissenters, he threatened to prosecute Mr. Fogwell if he allowed me to preach in his house. I thought it best not to expose any person to trouble and expense, and as the weather was mild, proposed preaching out of doors.

All readily agreed, and out we went, the parson following close at our heels. My text was "seek ye the Lord, while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Isaiah, 55:6. I was blessed with feeling and liberty in first showing that my text presupposed the greatest loss -- the favor and image of the Lord. Secondly, that this loss might now be remedied, and to this end was the exhortation given in the text:-- Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Hear it, O! my friends with inexpressible joy! You may all find in the second Adam, what you lost in the first Adam. Call ye upon him while He is near. Gracious encouragement -- you need not go far to find the inestimable blessing -- the Lord is near -- he is at your doors -- at your hearth. Call on him and open your hearts by faith, and the Lord will come in this day -- this hour -- this moment. Thirdly, I observed the dreadful consequences of neglecting to seek the Lord while he was to be found. That his Spirit would not always strive with man -- that the day of grace would not always last. Call on him therefore while he is near --before he removes from you his gospel, with all the ordinances of his house -- before he gives you up to your own hard hearts, and suffers your consciences to become seared as with an hot iron -- before he swears in his wrath you shall never enter into his rest -- before he gives you up to the devil, to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

I had no sooner concluded than the parson began addressing the congregation. -- He first observed, that the young man had given them a warm exhortation to a religious life, and that he liked what he had said, better than anything he had ever heard from any of them. [meaning, perhaps, "better than anything he had heard from any of the Methodist preachers" -- DVM] Turning from the people he began interrogating me before all present, as though he had been one of the Popes inquisitors. I was cautious in my answers, and gave him soft words, and no more than I could well avoid.

This was not the case with one of our other preachers, (A. W.) [Abraham Whitworth] that he met, and behaved with much more rudeness to. After he [Whitworth] had preached the parson got up, and made great exceptions to his having preached the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. He informed the congregation, that he had been so many years in such an academy, so many in such a college -- and had studied divinity so many -- and been preaching the gospel so many; yet he knew nothing of his sins being forgiven, or of being converted -- that he had a hope, as all Christian people had of being saved, and that was all any of us could have. That the stranger was a young man, without a college education, and that such ought not to be allowed to preach at all.

When he had done Abraham Whitworth rose again, for he was not easily intimidated. He observed, that the parson had given them a long detail of his great learning, and had in effect made out that learning was the only thing that prepared a man to preach the gospel -- that he could not boast of his learning; but still was of opinion that (notwithstanding all he had said) none were fit to preach but such as were converted, and sensible of their call to the ministry -- that he would propose a method that would bring the matter to a short issue. It was this:-- The parson might choose him a text anywhere in the Bible, and he would preach from it immediately, and then he would choose one for the parson, which he must preach from, and they should judge which was the best qualified to preach the gospel, the parson by his learning, or he by the grace of God. The proposal was popular, and took with the people, more than many arguments would have done. The parson excused himself by saying it was late in the day, &c. &c.

Though I had but a few places when I first went into the circuit, yet in a short time I was not able to go through them all in two weeks, and before I left it the circuit might have been readily enlarged to four weeks. Many were deeply awakened and soundly converted unto the Lord, and we had as powerful times for the number of people as I have generally seen. I was much blessed in my own soul, and greatly confirmed in my call to the work of the ministry. Day and night the salvation of the people among whom I labored was uppermost in my mind. Our little number was daily increased, and great were our rejoicings in the Lord our righteousness. The prospect was such, and our attachment to each other so great, that it was with some reluctance I returned home in the forepart of the spring following, while G. Y___y took my place.

My eldest brother's was the first place I arrived at, and found he had departed this mortal life a few weeks before. He died with a pleurisy after a few days illness. His end was peace; but, a few minutes before his spirit returned to God, he had his family called around him, and addressed them one by one, giving them his last and dying advice. After which he sung several verses of an hymn, and concluded with the following very pertinent words:

"Through all eternity, to thee,
A grateful song I'll raise:
But O, Eternity's too short
To utter all thy praise."

He was taken away before there was much, if any, talk among us about the impropriety of holding our fellow creatures in slavery, and of course left all his poor blacks in bondage, several of whom professed to enjoy the life and power of religion. I felt sorry from my heart that so pious a character should leave so bad an example behind him. I believe it was entirely owing to the prejudice of education and the want of not weighing the matter thoroughly.

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12 -- LONGED TO BE SANCTIFIED WHOLLY

My friends wishing me in Baltimore circuit, where I should be among them, were indulged therewith until the following conference; but I did not find that life, power, and liberty in my administrations, as among the people I had left on the other shore. I frequently found, to my great grief, that my religion was too superficial, and that though sin did not reign, yet it remained and marred my happiness. I often mourned and wept, fasted, prayed, and truly longed to be sanctified throughout, soul, body and spirit, that I might be able to serve the Lord without interruption. I do confess that lightness and trifling on any occasion ill-becomes a Christian, and especially a preacher of the gospel. Let others plead the innocence or usefulness of levity: I cannot: though God knows I am too often betrayed into it, but never, (to say the best of it) without feeling that it more or less unfits me for that deep recollection, and that constant communion with the Lord which nothing for a moment should interrupt.

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13 -- MAY, 1774 -- PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE -- SENT TO TRENTON N. J. CIRCUIT

May 25th, 1774, I attended conference in Philadelphia. I was much edified by the conversation of my elder brethren. I felt some embarrassment in having to preach before the preachers, and so large a congregation, in so large a house and city; but I endeavored to make a virtue of necessity, and as I could not give them anything that was wise, I endeavored to be as simple and childish as possible, and so, out of the fullness of my heart, I gave them a short discourse on the nature, necessity, and happiness of religion. I got through better than I expected, and felt thankful for the little assistance with which I was blessed.

I was appointed for Trenton Circuit, New Jersey, where I was most kindly received, and where the Lord was graciously pleased to own and bless my poor weak labors to saints and sinners. I felt freedom of spirit, and preached as if every sermon was my last. I felt myself on the Lord's business, and forgot (comparatively) all other concerns. In this Circuit I first met with the life and death of Thomas Walsh. In reading it, I was much affected indeed, under a deep sense of my want, both of grace and gifts. I saw perhaps much plainer than I ever did before, what manner of person a preacher ought to be, and that it was the privilege of all the children of God to love him with all the heart. Oh! how did I long to be delivered out of the hands of all my spiritual enemies. Lord! let me, "die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Though I had too much reason to fear that I increased much faster in gifts than in grace, yet did the Lord sustain me in my weakness, and in some measure gave me the desire of my heart, in seeing a gracious prospect of sinners being daily added to the Lord, and to his people: while our brethren sweetly went on hand in hand, bearing each others burdens, and striving together for the hope of the gospel.

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14 -- AT TRENTON WHEN HANCOCK AND ADAMS PASSED THROUGH

The dreadful cloud that had been hanging over us continued to gather thicker and thicker, so that I was often bowed down before the God of the whole earth, fearing the evils which were coming on our sinful land. I was in Trenton when Hancock and Adams passed through on their way to the First Congress, in Philadelphia. They were received with great pomp, and were much caressed by the inhabitants of the town.

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15 -- MOVED TO CHESTER CIRCUIT

Blundering A. R___s, got down in the course of this summer into Chester Circuit, and occasioned a considerable division in one of our societies. Mr. Rankin thought that D. R___f [Daniel Ruff] and I, had better change for a quarter; but with a promise that I should then return and stay till the following conference. I never moved from one circuit to another, but what it reminded me that I was a pilgrim -- that here I had no continuing city -- that I was a tenant at will, and ought to be always ready. The parting with my friends and going among perfect strangers, though very painful, was blessed to the weaning me from the love of creatures, and made me determine more

than ever to know nothing among men, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The Lord be praised for Christian friends; but keep me, O my God! -- from suffering any to draw my heart from thee.

I went round the circuit, and was in the neighborhood where the division existed several times, before I could get access to the leading characters. One evening I providentially attended one of their meetings to hear their preacher, and one of them invited me to preach at his house, which I gladly accepted, and made an appointment.

I found him not only wealthy, but a respectable and sincere inquirer after the Kingdom of God. To crown all, his wife had (or at least thought she had) seen me in a dream, and knew me is soon as she fixed her eyes on me, as one sent to deliver them from the impositions of an impostor, and to direct them in the ways of God. Poor deluded A. R___s was dismissed, and soon left the neighborhood. I continued to preach at their house while I stayed in the circuit, and left Mr. S___h, his wife and two daughters very respectable members of society: and the rest who had broken off returned with them. In several other places I was blessed with seeing the work reviving, and at the end of the quarter gladly recommended them to God and to the word of his grace, to return to my kind Trenton friends, who received me with as much affection as ever. I continued to have large congregations at most of the preaching places, and enjoyed in this circuit many conveniences. for improvement.

The latter part of the winter, and through the spring, many in the upper end of the circuit were greatly wrought on and our meetings were lively and powerful. The cries of the people for mercy were frequently loud and earnest, so that the voice of the speaker, or anyone praying, was frequently drowned. Several, who had long rested in a form of Godliness, were brought under pressing concern, and found the Lord, and many of the most serious were greatly quickened. I was often much blessed in my own soul, and my hands were lifted up, which were too apt to hang down. Oh! how sweet to labor where the Lord gives his blessing, and "sets open a door which no man can shut."

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16 -- MAY, 1775 -- CONFERENCE AT PHILADELPHIA -- SENT TO FREDERICK CIRCUIT

I spent nine months out of twelve in this circuit much to my comfort, and through grace I hope with a single eye, and was greatly encouraged to go on my way rejoicing. I attended conference in Philadelphia the 17th day of May, 1775. From there I returned home on my way to Frederick Circuit, Maryland.

I found considerable reluctance in going to this circuit, and was much discouraged for several weeks after I got into it: for although the friends were very kind and loving, yet their manners and way of living, with the want of convenience for retirement, with several other circumstances, made me fear that I should do neither them nor myself any good; so that from these outward appearances the temptations of the devil, with the many evils of my corrupt nature [Watters had not yet been sanctified wholly. -- DVM], I felt for a considerable time very great conflicts of soul, and was often so exceedingly dejected that I was hardly capable of preaching or conversing to any good purpose. These exercises for the present were not joyous, but grievous: yet

did they afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, while patience had her perfect work. In the midst of every trial I felt no wish to shun the cross, or desert the work of the Lord.

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17 -- JULY, 1775 -- GRACIOUS REVIVAL ON FREDERICK CIRCUIT

In July we were blessed with a gracious revival in the lower part of the circuit, which spread all around and continued increasing to the end of my stay. I now rejoiced that my lot was cast among a loving, simple-hearted people, who on all occasions showed such a willingness to be taught the way of life and salvation. It was truly affecting to me to see how they turned out by day and by night, while their earnest looks under the word, their many tears, their repeated inquiries about the things of the Kingdom showed that they came not in vain. There was not a week for a considerable time but what there were more or less happily brought to know the Lord, frequently two or three at a meeting. I often preached, prayed and exhorted till I was so exhausted that I have been scarcely able to stand.

This flame not only spread among poor sinners, but among professors also, and even reached my poor heart, so that I could not but praise and bless God's holy name, that though I was deprived of many conveniences yet he made all up unto me in spirituals. I was contented to sleep in cabins -- to eat a dry morsel -- and frequently to retire into the woods to read -- to pray and meditate. My Lord and Master on earth had no place whereon to lay his head, and shall not I be thankful for the meanest place? He was hated -- spit upon -- condemned -- and crucified -- and shall such a poor worm as I am look for any thing better? O my soul! take care of an aspiring mind. May I ever be sensible of the rock from whence I have been hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence I have been dug. I spent six months in this circuit, and believe that scores were added to the Lord, of such as were saved from sin. I had infinite cause to praise God that I had not labored in vain, nor spent my strength for nought.

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18 -- NOV., 1775 -- QUART. MEETING AT LEESBURG -- SENT TO FAIRFAX CIRCUIT

In the November following I attended a quarterly meeting with Mr. Rankin in Leesburg, Virginia, and afterwards went with him through part of the circuit, and seeing as I thought a considerable prospect of doing good, after attending two quarterly meetings in Maryland; and Mr. Rankin still thinking that Fairfax Circuit was the place for me at present, I set off with a Christian friend and began the circuit in Alexandria. As I went round the circuit I saw great appearances of many embracing the truth for about two-thirds thereof, but quite the reverse in the other part of it. Many were ripe for the gospel and gladly embraced the words eternal life, and in less than a quarter, we had the greatest revival I had ever seen in any place.

I spent the winter very agreeably, and enjoyed many divine seasons of grace. If ever I was enabled to labor heartily for the salvation of sinners, it was now. Indeed the great anxiety which appeared in many about their everlasting concerns, was truly affecting, and often led me to continue speaking and praying, till I have been so spent and broke down, that I often concluded I

could not hold out much longer; but according to my day, so also was my strength. So true is it, that the servants of the Lord do not go a warfare at their own charge.

We had several very astonishing instances of the mighty power of God, in the conviction and conversion of several respectable persons, among whom my much esteemed friend N. Reed [Nelson Reed] was not the least, who in a short time became a preacher in his neighborhood, and has adorned his profession now for a number of years. So gloriously did the word of the Lord prevail, that though we had preaching but once in three weeks in the same place, being alone in the circuit, yet in five or six months were added to the society upwards of one hundred souls.

* * *

19 -- RUMORS OF THE IMPENDING REVOLUTIONARY WAR -- A FAST APPOINTED

Though wars and rumors of wars were all around us, we were permitted to dwell in peace, while every man sat under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid. It is true we sometimes were charged with being deceivers, false prophets, enthusiasts, and even with being enemies to our country; but we seldom suffered either in person or property.

Congress having appointed a fast (as they frequently did during the war) to implore the divine protection in our unhappy struggles with our mother country, I had appointed to preach on the occasion, and finding that the parson of the parish had an appointment at the same hour, I thought it better with the congregation, to attend his appointment, intending nothing thereby but friendship, and thinking that on the present occasion it became us to forget all smaller differences, and to unite in seeking the common interest. The parson preached first. His text was Romans the 13th chapter, 1st and 2d verses:--"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation."

His discourse consisted of two parts. First, of what he called an explanation of the text. Secondly, an attack on the Methodists. This was to me more unexpected, as I never had heard of his saying a word about us in public. I was glad I happened to be present to speak for myself. We were all in general, and the preachers in particular, declared to be a set of Tories, under a cloak of religion. He said that the preachers were sent here by the English ministry to preach up passive obedience and non-resistance, that they pretended their desire for the salvation of the people, led them to travel and preach through the country; but money in his opinion was their real object. He concluded this part of his subject by declaring that he would, if at the helm of our national affairs, make our nasty stinking carcasses pay for our pretended scruples of conscience.

My turn was next, and my text was Matthew 17:21 -- "Howbeit, this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting." My first proposition was, that all men since the fall were possessed of this evil spirit, that goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting. After proving this doctrine from the old and new Testament. My second attempt was to prove it from matter of fact among all people, and in every age of the world down to the present day. Among other proofs I remarked it was this spirit that had led those, who had been our guardians and ought still to be such, to become our unnatural oppressors in the present unhappy war, and that it was our duty in our affliction to humble

ourselves under the hands of Almighty God, who, only could turn the hearts of our oppressors, and defend us from their cruel power, it being the same with the Lord to save by few or by many.

But a still stronger proof of this spirit possessing all orders of men, until he is cast out by prayer and fasting, is, that until that event takes place, he even creeps into the sacred pulpit, and often rails and reviles others of different denominations, because they differ in some smaller matter of religion. My second proposition was, that this evil spirit -- this spirit of the Devil, is in this day (as heretofore) to be actually cast out by prayer and fasting.

Thirdly, I was to reply to the accusations just brought against the Methodists. First, I observed, that in all accusations particularly those of a public nature, where there was no proof offered, (and that the parson had not pretended to offer any of any sort) they deserved no answer, except by silent contempt; yet as the present assertions were of so extraordinary a nature, I hoped I should be excused on the present occasion in acting in a different manner.

First -- The parson has told you, "we are all Tories." I say as pre-emptorily we are not, and call on him or the whole neighborhood, to prove if they can, an action in any one of us, which is unbecoming good citizens.

Second -- The parson has told you, "we are sent by the British ministry, to preach up passive obedience and non-resistance." I deny that they ever sent me, or that they knew there is such a being on earth. I appeal to the many hundreds and thousands both in the towns and in the country, who are our stated hearers, whether they have ever heard any one of us say one word like the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, and that I was confident the present large and respectable congregation must and would acquit us from any such charge.

Likewise I do in the most unequivocal manner deny knowing anything about the Methodist preachers being sent by anyone but Jesus Christ, who hath said "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." The parson has also told you, "that we preached for money." Then I venture to say we preach for what we don't get. I cannot tell what could induce him to assert this, unless it is from his own motive in preaching. Certainly if I was so disposed I might retort. But to our own master, "we stand or fall." I concluded by observing, that though I did not think politics ought to be introduced into the sacred pulpit on any occasion, yet I did most seriously deny that there was one drop of Tory blood flowing through my veins. I firmly believed my business was to preach the gospel, and not to meddle with those public affairs, which were in much better hands, and in my opinion was unbecoming men of my profession.

The parson was polite enough to stay and hear me till I drew near a close, he then quietly and alone rode off; or we might have had each other, company in riding home.

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PART THIRD -- 1776 -- 1780

A Continuance of my Exercises and Ministerial Labors, from 1776 to 1780

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20 -- MAY, 1776 -- CONFERENCE AT BALTIMORE -- SENT TO FAIRFAX CIRCUIT

May 1st, 1776 -- I attended conference in Baltimore Town. It was a good time, and I was much refreshed in meeting with my "brethren and companions in tribulation and in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ." We were of one heart and mind, and took sweet counsel together, not how we should get riches or honors, or any thing that this poor world could afford us: but how we should make the surest work for Heaven and eternal happiness, and be the instruments of saving others. We had a powerful time in our love feast a little before we parted, While we sat at our divine Master's feet, and gladly heard each other tell what the Lord had done by us, in the different places in which we been laboring.

After spending a few days with my relations I returned back to Fairfax circuit with another preacher with me, and, after enlarging it into four weeks, [into a four weeks circuit], I went up through Berkeley and Frederick counties, preaching to very large and attentive congregations, and in several neighborhoods where they never had any Methodist preaching before. I met with several very encouraging circumstances in this route of a few weeks, from several under deep conviction, who came to inquire what they must do to be saved. I omit relating particulars, lest I should appear to be setting forth (what I, of all men, ought to abhor) my own praise. May I ever be thankful for the least favor, but God forbid I should ever "sacrifice to my own drag." O! that I may ever be as clay in the hands of my divine potter. My God save me from this evil man, (myself). [Again, this was before he was sanctified wholly. -- DVM] This tour through different neighborhoods, and among all sorts of people, was much blessed to my soul. I had many powerful seasons in public and private, and labored day and night, while the people came from all quarters to hear the words of eternal life.

For these six or seven years past, preaching and inviting poor sinners to the arms and open side of the Friend of sinners, has been my chief delight, and more than my daily meat and drink. Blessed be God, and to his eternal praise be it spoken, that I seldom preached in my neighborhood, but what He bore witness to the word of his grace, and gave me seals to my ministry. How true is it, "the Lord sends by whom he will."

By continual labors I was often much worn down, and at this time I was greatly afflicted with a cough that was hard to be removed, and thought I was dying a sure, though lingering, death, and although I have feared hastening my dissolution by an ill-judged zeal, yet I have long desired not to live to be useless. It is much more desirable to wear out than to rust out. My merciful God! keep me from offering unto thee the sacrifice of self-murder. And O! keep me from wrapping in a napkin and burying my talent with the slothful servant in the earth.

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21 -- FALL OF 1776 -- VISITED BERKELEY CIR., ATTENDED QUARTERLY MEETING

In the fall I visited Berkeley Circuit, and attended their quarterly meeting, and was not a little rejoiced to see the work increasing on every hand. I returned through Fairfax preaching and

taking my leave after spending twelve months, for the most part among them. May the God of all grace water the seed which has been sown, that they may bring forth fruit with patience unto the end.

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22 -- LAST TWO QUARTERS OF THE CONFERENCE-YEAR ON FREDERICK CIRCUIT

I passed through Baltimore town and county, preaching in several places on my way to the quarterly meeting, held in my brother's meeting house, where we had been often uncommonly blessed at such times, with the presence and power of the most high God. From thence I went into Frederick Circuit, for the second time for two quarters, with a loving, simple-hearted people, I trust not altogether in vain. The members of this circuit are happy in being of one heart and mind. Disputes are seldom heard of. Few fall off. The most appear to be growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We had a few instances through both quarters, in most places in the Circuit, of sinners being convinced, and converted to the Lord.

On my way to conference I met with my friend captain Brickell, from Norfolk. It brought to my mind the days that were past, when in weakness and in much fear and trembling, I first saw him and his family. O! how kind a Providence has been over me from that day to this, and yet how little have been the returns of love and praises that I have made to the best of masters.

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23 -- MAY, 1777 -- CONF. AT DEER CREEK -- APPOINTED TO BRUNSWICK CIRCUIT

May 20, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven, our conference began at my eldest brother's preaching house, Deer Creek. It was a time much to be remembered. The Lord was graciously with us. There appearing no probability of the contests ending shortly, between this country and Great Britain; several of our European preachers, thought if an opportunity should offer, they would return to their relations and homes in the course of the year; and to provide against such an event, five of us, Gatch, Dromgoole, Ruff, Glendenning and myself, were appointed as a committee, to act in the place of the general Assistant, in case they should all go before next conference.

It was also submitted to the consideration of this conference, whether in our present situation, of having but, few ministers left in many of our Parishes, to administer the ordinances of Baptism, and the Lord's supper, we should not administer them ourselves, for as yet we had not the ordinances among us, but were dependent on other denominations for them. Some received them from and communed with the Presbyterians, but the greater part with the Church of England. In fact we considered ourselves at this time as belonging to the Church of England, it being before our separation, and our becoming a regularly formed Church.

After much conversation on the subject, it was unanimously agreed to lay it over for the determination of the next conference, to be held in Leesburg, the 19th day of May. I never saw so affecting a scene at the parting of the preachers before. Our hearts were knit together, as the hearts

of David and Jonathan, and we were obliged to use great violence to our feelings in tearing ourselves asunder. This was the last time I ever saw my very worthy friends and fathers, Rankin and Shadford.

I was appointed for Brunswick circuit in the lower parts of Virginias, with Garrettson, and Tunnell. On my way down I preached a funeral sermon over one of my friends in Fairfax, who had desired that if I should survive him, I would perform this last office of love. So uncertain is human life -- "Therefore, be ye also ready, for at an hour when ye think not the Son of man cometh." I traveled for several days in company with my brethren who were going to the different circuits between James river and the Roanoke. Our conversation was, I trust, such as became the gospel, and was both edifying and strengthening, while the chief of us were entire strangers to all we met with. We all appeared to breath the same spirit, and I verily believe our sole desire, in leaving our little all, was that we might be instrumental in the hands of God, in bringing lost sinners into the fold of Christ. On my way, I had the pleasure of hearing Mr. McRoberts preach Christ, and him crucified to a listening multitude. He was the first minister of the church of England, that ever I heard preach Christian experience.

Preaching several times on my way I was taken (in a manner that I could not account for) with a hoarseness that for a long time proved a very great affliction indeed. Weak, and hardly able to sit on my horse, I at last came to the house of Mr. Jarratt, with whom I stayed a night, as I did every time I came round my circuit. His barn, well fitted up with seats and a pulpit, was one of our preaching places, and I found him very friendly and attentive to me while I stayed in the parts. The Sunday following, I began my circuit at Mayberry's Chapel, where we had a comfortable meeting. I felt the charge of a six weeks circuit very sensibly, and was often led to pray and look up to the Strong for strength.

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24 -- ON BRUNSWICK CIRCUIT, MET SEVERAL WHO WERE SANCTIFIED WHOLLY

I had not been long, nor gone far in this circuit, before I met with several who I fully believed to be further advanced in the Divine life, than any I had ever conversed with before. I had long desired to see some of those who had experienced the great salvation. I now believed the Lord had granted me the desire of my heart in that respect. I was often humbled in the dust, and did most ardently wish to be a Christian indeed. O! the darkness of my mind in the deep things of God. Through the summer I endeavored to pay the greatest attention to the state of my mind, and daily wrote down my exercises. I was more frequent and fervent in private duties, and endeavored not only to desire, but to expect, that the Lord would cleanse and save me to the uttermost.

In this circuit we had many hearers, but only a few of those who were not of our society appeared to be benefited by our preaching. There were large societies in almost every neighborhood, and generally speaking, our brethren were lively, many of them much so. My hands were full, and my work was much greater than my strength; so that I often feared I did not pay that particular attention to every soul of my charge, that I ought. My two brethren who labored with me, were very devout and faithful men, and I was not a little comforted in the thoughts, that they would supply my lack of service. We endeavored to bear each other's burdens, and strengthen each

other's hands; and though our success was by no means equal to our wishes, yet the Lord did evidently own us in every neighborhood, both in and out of our societies. We labored to the utmost of our abilities in the good and gracious cause of our glorious Master, and daily found his service to be perfect freedom.

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25 -- AUGUST, 1777 -- QUARTERLY MEETING AT MAYBERRY'S CHAPEL

Our first quarterly meeting was held at Mayberry's Chapel in August, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven. We had a very large assembly of people, and many preachers. We were a little interrupted just before our meeting commenced. Several of us being from another state, a magistrate presented to us the oath of allegiance, (just published) which required ministers of every denomination belonging to another state, if they refused taking it, to give bond and security to leave the state in a given time, or go to jail. As it respected myself, I had no hesitation in taking it; but the difficulty was, several of my brethren could not, and my taking it would make them the more suspected, though there was no more to be feared from them, than myself. Finding, from our conversation that the magistrate grew very uneasy, I concluded that if I was to take the oath, he would overlook the others present, as the quarterly meeting was called mine. A. Y___n, a Virginian, and myself took it, and it was as I expected, -- he quietly retired, and I believe he was fully persuaded that however weak we might be, we were conscientious men, and not unfriendly to our country.

Our preaching commenced immediately. The Lord was present and gave a door of utterance, and the word was like a "hammer and fire, -- that breaks the rocks in pieces." The little seeming opposition that we had met with, roused up the minds of some of our warm friends, and several appeared to possess a good degree of the spirit of martyrs. The God of Daniel was in the midst, and many on both days of our meeting shouted aloud the praises of our Immanuel. We parted filled with zeal, and more than ever determined to follow the Lord fully.

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26 -- FALL OF 1777 -- SENT TO PITTSYLVANIA CIRCUIT

Being directed by conference to visit Pittsylvania Circuit, in the course of the fall, I spent about one half of the following quarter in that circuit, and was seldom a day without preaching, unless I was traveling through some unsettled parts, though generally weak and much oppressed with my hoarseness; nor could I find that any application had the least effect. This thorn in the flesh in the end I believe had its use, and for aught I know, might be a means of preventing me from shortening my days; for the defect in my throat was such that I could seldom raise my voice to any considerable degree, and therefore might have prevented a breast complaint, of which some of my friends supposed I was in considerable danger. I never was so sensible as now, of the blessing of a clear strong voice in preaching, and hoped that if ever restored to me again, I should be more careful to use it to some good purpose.

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27 -- FALL OF 1777 -- QUARTERLY MEETING -- APPOINTED TO SUSSEX CIRCUIT

At our fall quarterly meeting, the preachers from the different circuits round us, met in order to make different arrangements for the ensuing half year. I never saw men who appeared to possess more faith and zeal for the glorious Redeemer's cause. I felt humbled among them to see many, much younger in the ministry, far before me in holy zeal and fervor. It was a good and profitable time to me, and much more so to many others.

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28 -- JANUARY, 1778 -- SET OUT FOR SUSSEX CIRCUIT

After resting for several weeks, only preaching occasionally, I set out into Sussex Circuit, January, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-eight, as much alive to God as perhaps I ever was in going to my new place. I often had remarkable liberty in preaching, and was at other times as much shut up, though I knew not how to account for it; yet I never found in any circuit I ever rode, so great and so little liberty in my public exercises.

If I did ever desire to be wholly the Lord's it was now. My heart through grace was constantly fixed upon the object of my desires. I met with many in this circuit as well as in the last I rode, whose "fellowship was truly with the father and his son Jesus Christ;" who were giving all diligence to make their calling and their election sure. They were to me the excellent of the earth, with whom I often took sweet counsel, and bowed down before the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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29 -- OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT -- STRONG CRIES/PRAYERS FOR PERFECT LOVE

I did not get round the circuit the second time, before the Lord was graciously pleased to pour out his Spirit in a very unusual manner, just after I had been preaching, and was meeting the class. The windows of Heaven were opened, and the Lord poured out such a blessing as our hearts were not able to contain. We had indeed, "good measure heaped up and running over." We were so filled with the love of God, and over-awed with his Divine Majesty, that we lay prostrate at his footstool, scarcely able to rise from our knees for a considerable time, while there were strong cries and prayers from every part of the house, for that "perfect love which casteth out all fear, that hath torment."

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30 -- WATTERS' EARNEST SEEKING FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

Surely it is a truth that ought never to be forgotten: We can never expect too much from God, nor too little from man. I felt faint, and my system was much affected through the vehemence of my desires after the divine image. O, my God! when shall I awake up with thy likeness, and be

filled with thy fullness? Such a flame was kindled within, that I hoped it would continue to rise higher and higher, till my spirit returned to God who gave it. But too soon, in part, it died away; yet not without leaving in some good measure its blessed effects. Oh! for stability, and a persevering disposition, that I may never weary -- never look back or faint in my mind.

I was enabled day and night to go on, and in about eight or ten days after the above mentioned time, as I was again meeting the class after preaching, the glorious presence and power of God, rested upon us in a manner I had never known before. For an hour and a half, we all continued constant in prayer and supplication to be saved from [inbred] sin, that we might be able in our weak manner, while in this world to glorify God, in every breath. Great was the travail of my soul, but could not prevail; yet fully determined through grace, not to give over my pursuit. I saw daily my corrupt nature and the imperfections of my most holy things, in a manner I never, did before, while those words of our Saviour ran through my inmost soul in silent but powerful accents -- "For without me ye can do nothing"; yet I knew "there was therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

I knew that I was, in Christ, saved from the power and guilt of sin, but not from its remains. I was several times thus wrought on very powerfully, and was in an agony of soul and body to be wholly the Lords, above all things desiring to be a Christian indeed, in whom there is no guile. I saw an unspeakable fullness and willingness in Christ, to save to the utmost all that came to God through him; yet often after long and earnest wrestling as in an agony, I have, though very reluctantly risen without obtaining the mind that was in Christ. Many were my inward conflicts, and earnest were my struggles after all the depth of love. I felt that the least spiritual blessing that I enjoyed, was infinitely more than I deserved, and was encouraged to believe that the will of God, was my utmost salvation from all sin, and the precious promises of the Gospel were in my view, all yea and amen, to the believing soul. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." Holiness and the fruits thereof were the desire of my longing, panting, thirsty soul; and although I knew that if I obtained but the lowest seat in Heaven, and was saved even as by fire, it would be a mercy of mercies; yet could I feelingly, and from my heart, say:

"Tis worse than death my God to love,
"And not my God alone."

On that day four weeks [later], I had been peculiarly stirred up to seek the Lord to deepen his work in my heart, and at the same place as brother D___d was speaking to the class, just after I had been preaching. Many were groaning for a deeper work of grace, while our heart melted before the Lord as wax before the fire, and the Spirit and the bride said, come, O! come, and accomplish thy gracious promises in our souls. Come and destroy the man of sin, and make us complete in thy image.

He spoke to each one in particular, and earnestly pressed them to look up by faith, and to look up now just as they were. When he concluded I went to prayer, but my voice was soon lost in the earnest cries of those around. I was in an agony, and my heart ready to burst asunder with longing after the blessing, expecting every moment to hear the kind release: Go in peace, and sin no more. My cry was incessant -- Father glorify thy name -- pour out thy Spirit. I felt a deep and awful sense of the Divine presence, and a calm within that words cannot describe. I was in my

own eyes less than the least of all God's people, and knew that all was of grace; but dare not confidently conclude that my soul was fully renewed in love.

Before I closed my eyes for sleep, I felt greater confidence that the Lord had graciously deepened his work, and a distinct witness that I was his. The holy fire, the Heavenly flame instead of sinking or decreasing as it frequently had done after great refreshments, now arose higher and higher. My heart was enlarged for the salvation of sinners, but more especially for the Children of God, that they might be kept from the evil in the world, and be made perfect in Christ Jesus.

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31 -- WATTERS FILLED WITH ASSURANCE CONCERNING HIS SANCTIFICATION

In a few weeks, I found that it is by faith we stand in every state of grace, and was deeply exercised with fears, that I had not held fast the beginning of my confidence. I felt no abatement of my desires, and through grace did not slacken in the outward means, but my confidence was greatly impaired. A little after sunset, with a friend I withdrew from the house into a solitary place, and on my knees most earnestly desired not to rise till every doubt was removed from my anxious breast. I was most graciously and powerfully blessed, and filled with confidence and peace, and for the present felt more established than I had at any time been.

The most glorious work that ever I beheld was in this circuit among believers. Scores professed to be sanctified unto the Lord. I could not be satisfied without pressing on Christians their privilege, and indeed I could not but remark that however able the speaker, if nothing of the sanctification of the spirit was dwelt on, they appeared not to be satisfied, and that however weak, if they from the fullness of their hearts and in faith, exhorted believers to go on to perfection, the word was blessed.

The time of my leaving Sussex now drew near, and the last appointment I had with this happy people, was at the quarterly meeting at B_____ 's Chapel, [Barratt's Chapel] where many praised God for the consolation; and in the evening at a friend's we were visited with such an overwhelming power of divine grace, that many were constrained to say, we never before saw it on this wise.

From this meeting I set out for the conference, and was much afraid if my lot should be cast among those who were not going on to perfection, I should lose that deep sense of the divine presence, with which I had been blessed for some time past.

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32 -- MAY 1778 -- CONFERENCE AT LEESBURG -- APPOINTED TO FAIRFAX CIRCUIT

Tuesday the 19th of May, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-eight, our conference began in Leesburg, Virginia. Mr. Rankin and Mr. Shadford, had left the continent and returned home, having intended staying only four years when they first came to America. Mr. Asbury had stopped traveling. He was an Englishman, and that was enough with some, why he should be

suspected as unfriendly to our cause and country, though I will venture to say that his greatest enemy could allege nothing else against him, nor even that with propriety.

Having no old preachers with us, we were as orphans bereft of our spiritual parents, and though young and inexperienced to transact the business of conference, yet the Lord looked graciously upon us, and had the uppermost seats in all our hearts, and of course in our meeting. As the consideration of our administering the ordinances were at the last conference laid over till this, it of course came on and found many advocates. It was with considerable difficulty that a large majority was prevailed on to lay it over again, till the next conference, hoping that we should by then be able to see our way more clear in so important a change.

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33 -- WATTERS' MARRIAGE TO SARAH ADAMS -- JUNE 6, 1778

My appointment was in Fairfax Circuit, and after visiting my relations I returned to my station, feeling as ever a wish to do and suffer the will of the Lord. After much consideration on the subject and earnest prayer for directions, and between two and three years acquaintance, I was married to Sarah Adams, the sixth day of June, one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight. I considered her as given me by the Lord, and believed she would approve herself a true help meet in the Lord Jesus.

I regularly attended my appointments, and often found special assistance in declaring the words of eternal life, nor did I find that any thing could give me contentment, without my heart being in the work of my blessed master, either laboring for the salvation of sinners or the establishment of the children of God. No part of the continent suffered less with the distresses of the war, than those parts for a considerable distance both above and below; yet we could feel even here in many instances, that it often checked the vital flame. The fears and care that would necessarily crowd in upon, even the pious, at being drafted or being the next that might be drafted, and sent into distant parts with other hardships that are concomitants of war and slaughter, were unfriendly to them, as likewise to sinners embracing religion or adorning their profession if they did embrace it.

Yet it is not more astonishing than true, that the work continued to spread, in all those parts where we had preachers to labor, and I doubt whether, at any time before or since, the work has been more genuine among us, than it was through the war. Some few both of preachers and people were called to suffer in their persons, or property; but such instances were comparatively few, and their sufferings short. I do not know that I ever, before or since the war, traveled with more safety, among all sorts of people, and in every place, were I believed it my duty to go.

Though a friend to my country, I left politics to those better qualified to defend and discuss them. Preaching was my business: to teach men how to live and to be prepared to die.

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34 -- FALL OF 1778 -- TOUR OF PRINCE WILLIAM, STAFFORD, KING GEORGE,

SPOTTSYLVANIA, HANOVER CIRCUITS

The fall following I took a tour in company with my dear friend C. P____d through Prince William, Stafford, King George, Spottsylvania, and part of Hanover Counties, to see what prospect there was of forming a circuit, or circuits through them. This was before what is now called Stafford and Lancaster Circuits were formed. I found many open doors, and was treated kindly in most places. I had great liberty and enlargement of heart in preaching in this rambling way among strangers. I met with many friendly people, and shall hardly ever forget the expressions of one of them, an old lady, while I was conversing with her husband by their fire side. I observed to the old man that it was time to seek the Lord, that he had been spared long. She replied with uplifted hands and weeping eyes, with such an emphasis that very much affected me. "Time, O! its more than time;" The whole of her behavior, while I was at their house, she was equally expressive that she had stood idle all the day until the eleventh hour, and that she was now determined to enter in among the laborers into the vineyard.

After a few weeks I returned to my circuit and found the blessedness of being with those who loved the Lord Jesus in deed and in truth. I saw from day to day the impossibility of retaining any degree of grace without pressing continually forward and taking the kingdom of Heaven by violence. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

From my particular knowledge of all the preachers, I foresaw what would be the consequences of the subject of the ordinances which had been so warmly debated the two preceding conferences, and which I was fully satisfied a number of them were determined to adopt at the ensuing conference, though it were at the expense of an entire division. My great concern was not whether we should or should not adopt them; but on account of the division that I was satisfied would take place at their being adopted. I could freely and without hesitation have agreed either way to have prevented what I considered one of the greatest evils that could befall us. This important matter lay with solemn weight day and night on my mind and caused me many sleepless hours.

Nothing to me, appeared more formidable, and leading to more terrible consequences than introducing unscriptural doctrines into, or dividing, the Church of Christ. I finally came to a determination to endeavor by every means in my power to prevent a division: or if that could not be done, to stand in the gap as long as possible. I had no sooner come to this determination than the peace and witness I felt within fully satisfied me that I was on the ground on which the Lord set me, and that through his grace neither friends nor foes, rough nor smooth usage, should prevent me from endeavoring to hold those together, whom God had joined.

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35 -- APRIL 28, 1779 -- SPECIAL CONFERENCE AT JUDGE WHITE'S -- MAY 18, 1779,
REGULAR CONFERENCE AT FLUVANNA

A few weeks before the annual conference came on, Mr. Asbury and the preachers east of the Potomac assembled in conference at Thomas White's in Delaware, the 28th April 1779. I had

no notice sent me, and was in a very weak state of health from a bowel complaint, with which I had, for two months been afflicted. Yet I determined if possible to get there. One of my objects in attending this meeting was to get Mr. Asbury to attend the regularly appointed conference to be held the 18th May, 1779, at the Brokenback Church, Fluvanna County, Virginia.

But with all that I could say or do, he could not be prevailed on; for many had taken up strange notions about the Methodist preachers, and of the Englishmen among us in particular, being tools of the British ministry, which made him and his friends around him, think it imprudent for him to leave his present situation where he was well known, and where there was a very great revival of the work. All I could obtain, was the opinion and determination of this little conference, on the matter in debate, and a few letters, from Mr. Asbury to several of the oldest preachers.

I was the only preacher in connection who attended both conferences. I felt a heavy heart at both, and could not but wonder at seeing some of the best men that I ever knew so little concerned, to appearance, at what to me was one of the greatest matters in the world. Several of the southern preachers complained that there had been an illegal conference held to keep as many of the northern preachers from conference as possible, lest they should join with them in adopting the ordinances. After much loving talk on the subject all but a few determined on appointing a committee to ordain each others and then all the rest. The few who did not agree to what was done, who were not confined by families, came in company with me, and took their stations more to the north.

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36 -- APRIL-MAY, 1779 -- APPOINTED TO BALTIMORE CIRCUIT

I was, at both of the above mentioned conferences, appointed for Baltimore Circuit, with T. C___w, and W. A___s, which then included the Town and Point. I never went to my appointment under a more clear conviction, that my way was prepared of the Lord, and that I should not labor in vain, nor run uncertainly, nor fight as one that beateth the air. My prayer was that I might go up in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of peace. My wife had the last year continued at her father's, but now moved with me and stayed at my eldest brother's, who was as a father and brother to her in my absence. She by this means had an opportunity of becoming particularly acquainted with all my relations.

The first time I went round the circuit, I met with much encouragement, my brethren received me with affection, and expressed great confidence that the Lord had come with me, and would bless my labors among them. Many poor sinners were cut to the heart and humbled in the dust before the Judge of all the earth, and were happily brought out of darkness into the glorious light of the gospel. There was a general move, and quickening among the members of society. We had but few exceptions. Many of them were deeply convinced of the remains of sin, and determined to tarry in Jerusalem, until they were endowed with power from on high, to love God! with all their hearts; and a considerable number through grace, found the great and gracious promises of the glorious gospel applied to their souls, to in destruction of sin. We sweetly pulled together, and were of one heart and mind; while the ungodly in many places, and in many instances stood astonished, and could but acknowledge the arm of the Lord was visibly revealed.

I could not be satisfied without pressing with all my might, a present and full salvation from all sin, and many I am fully persuaded to this day, recollect those divine seasons with, grateful hearts, and have ever since felt their happy effects, and will feel them more fully to all eternity. I never traveled any circuit with more satisfaction and profit, to my own spiritual interest; and could have willingly stayed longer where the Lord was so powerfully working, and where there were so many strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, continually giving glory to God and the Lamb, whose promises to them were all yea, and in him amen: not my will; but thine be done.

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37 -- LAST QUARTERLY MEETING OF THE 1779-80 CHURCH YEAR

Our last quarterly meeting was held at my brother's preaching house Deer Creek. My good friend W. M___e a local preacher from Baltimore Town preached the first sermon in which he particularly dwelt on indwelling sin in believers, and their privilege in Christ to be saved therefrom -- that this salvation was by faith alone -- that all who feel the want thereof ought to look up now, just as they are, believing that all is of grace and continually crying out, Lord I believe help thou my unbelief, expecting the blessing every day -- every hour -- every moment. Many were the witnesses present who set their seals to those divine truths, knowing them not barely from the hearing of the ear; but from blessed experience.

Our love feast was one of the best I ever was in. We sat together in heavenly places; and to express myself the words which I immediately wrote down, I was as in a little Heaven below, and believe Heaven above will differ more in quantity than in quality. Never did I hear such experiences before. Our eyes overflowed with tears, and our hearts with love to God and each other. The holy fire, the heavenly flame, spread wider and wider, and rose higher and higher. O! happy people whose God is the Lord, may none of you ever weary in well doing. May we after having done the work allotted us, meet in our Father's Kingdom, to tell the wonders of redeeming love and part no more.

Till then, let us never forget the example of the great apostle to the Gentiles which ought never to be forgotten even by those in the highest state of grace: "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection lest that by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a castaway." Adam, though created in the image of God, fell from Paradise. Lucifer, an Angel of light, fell from his high abode to the bottomless pit; "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." May the Lord be as a wall of fire around us and the glory of God in the midst, until all our days are numbered. Until then may we watch and toil to make the blessed shore.

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38 -- APPOINTED TO FREDERICK CIRCUIT AT LAST QUARTERLY MEETING 1779-80

The Sabbath following I commenced Frederick circuit for the third time, and preached a funeral sermon over one of my old friends who had just bid adieu to this poor world. Her end was

peace and her Christian friends had good hope in her death. Its to be lamented she was the only one in her family, who knew the Lord, and though she appeared unmoved by husband and children; yet it is not unlikely that she was taken from the evil to come. Thus we are going the way of all flesh, and presently shall be numbered with the clods of the valley. Well may God help us to make a virtue of necessity, and as we cannot avoid, may we prepare to meet the King of Terror. Even so Lord Jesus. Amen.

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39 -- JANUARY, 1780 -- PREACHED HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW'S FUNERAL

January 1st one thousand seven hundred and eighty. I preached a funeral sermon over one of my wife's brothers, who was one of the preachers that rode Baltimore Circuit with me the two last quarters -- a young man who lived holy and died happy. Many had expected that he was to be a very useful man in the vineyard! but he was cut off before he had quite reached twenty one. The judgments of the Lord are a great deep. What "I do now (said our divine master to his first disciples) thou knowest not but thou shall know hereafter." May we learn (never to forget) that our possessing gifts, and grace, or our being useful to the souls of others in our day, gives us no lease for one moment. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

The severity of the winter with the vast quantity of snow, and my having several quarterly meetings besides my own to attend, I was more exposed, and suffered more with the cold than ever I did any winter since I traveled; but through infinite mercy I was preserved from many dangers, and enabled to go on my way rejoicing. The brethren in general still manifested the same sincerity and steadiness as ever, they have been gradually increasing since my first acquaintance with them till they have become numerous, and, what is a much greater cause of gratitude and thanksgiving, they have happily kept their first love, and are following on to know the Lord. There were not at that time any people that I could address with greater confidence in the apostle's words: "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men; for as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink; but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone; but in fleshly tables of the heart." During the two quarters that I was now in Frederick, there were several in different neighborhoods that professed to obtain a deep work of grace, and there was a gradual increase in most of the societies.

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PART FOURTH -- 1780 -- 1783

An account of my exercises and travels from one thousand seven hundred and eighty to my location the first time in one thousand seven hundred eighty three.

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40 -- APRIL 24, 1780 -- CONF. AT BALTIMORE -- SENT TO FREDERICK CIRCUIT

April twenty-fourth one thousand seven and eighty, our conference began in Baltimore for those preachers who rejected the administering the ordinances. Two of our brethren from below, Gatch and R. Ellis who had adopted the administering the ordinances, attended to see if anything could be done to prevent a total disunion, for they did not wish that to be the case. They both thought their brethren were hard with them and there was little appearance of anything but an entire separation. They complained that I was the only one who did not join them, that treated them with affection and tenderness. Before conference rose, it appointed Mr. Asbury, Garrettson and myself to attend their conference below, but as nothing less than their suspending the administering of the ordinances, could be the terms of our treaty with them, I awfully feared our visit would be of little consequence, yet I willingly went down in the name of God -- hoping against hope.

We found our brethren as loving and as full of zeal as ever, and as fully determined on persevering in their newly adopted mode; for to all their former arguments, they now added (what with many was infinitely stronger than all the arguments in the world) that the Lord approbated, and greatly blessed his own ordinances, by them administered the past year. We had a great deal of loving conversation with many tears; but I saw no bitterness, no shyness, no judging each other. We wept, and prayed, and sobbed, but neither would agree to the other's terms. In the mean time I was requested to preach at twelve o'clock. As I had many preachers and professors to hear me, I spoke from the words of Moses to his father-in-law: "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

After waiting two days, and all hopes failing of any accommodation taking place, we had fixed on starting back early in the morning, but late in the evening it was proposed by one of their own party in conference, (none of the others being present) that there should be a suspension of the ordinances for the present year, and that our circumstances should be laid before Mr. Wesley and his advice solicited in the business; also that Mr. Asbury should be requested to ride through the different circuits and superintend the work at large. The proposal in a few minutes took with all but a few. In the morning instead of coming off in despair of any remedy, we were invited to take our seats again in conference, where with great rejoicings and praises to God, we on both sides heartily agreed to the above accommodation.

I could not but say it is of the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. I knew of nothing upon earth that could have given me more real consolation, and could not but be heartily thankful for the stand I had taken, and the part I had acted during the whole contest. I had by several leading characters, on both sides been suspected of leaning to the opposite. Could all have agreed to the administering the ordinances, I should have had no objection; but until that was the case, I could not view ourselves ripe for so great a change. In a letter I received from Mr. _____ in the course of the year, he observed among other things, "Nothing shakes Bro. _____ like your letters. You will, I hope, continue to write and spare not."

We now had every reason to believe that every thing would end well: that the evils which had actually attended our partial division, would make us more cautious how we should entertain one thought of taking any step that should have the least tendency to so great an evil. It is an observation that I have seen in some of Mr. Wesley's works. None can so effectually hurt the

Methodists as the Methodists. The more I know of Methodism, the more I am confirmed in the correctness of the observation. The Lord make and keep us of one heart and mind.

Having returned back to Frederick circuit greatly refreshed with the success of our conference below, I was strengthened in soul and body to cry aloud and spare not. The societies continued lively through the course of the summer and autumn and many were convinced and added to the church. Although I have a particular memorandum by me of each day's exercise and employment, I have no wish to publish what could not be useful to any but myself. Yet, I hope I shall be excused in giving a short extract of what I wrote down from day to day, --or as soon as I was able at this part of my crooked [crooked, meaning diverse or varied -- DVM] life, -- as I felt myself under the greatest obligations to record the infinite and unmerited lovingkindness, with which God in his Fatherly wisdom saw fit to visit me in my light affliction.

[August 30, 1780] -- Wednesday thirtieth August, one thousand seven hundred and eighty. I long to be more engaged at all times. I strove to get my spiritual strength renewed, and was much humbled on account of my littleness of faith. I preached to a large congregation who drank in the word, as the thirsty earth the rain. We then spent some time in a love feast. I was blessed with comfort and liberty in speaking.

[August 31, 1780] -- Thursday. I want to live this day as if my last. I have been blessed these several days with seriousness and a desire to be wholly devoted to God in life and in death. I want to enjoy in my inmost soul, the light, life and power of true Godliness. The people were considerably affected under the word, but I am seriously afraid that many of them are determined to put off the evil day as long as possible. Lord what a stupid creature is man!

[September 1, 1780] -- Friday, September 1st. I arose early and soon after I got to my preaching place was taken unwell, which continued to increase till I had done preaching. I was glad then to take my bed. I found a heart to praise God, and faith to believe that the affliction was sent for my good, and could feelingly say it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good. By night my fever was somewhat abated, and I was blessed with a comfortable night's rest.

[September 2, 1780] -- Saturday. I feel an humbling, thankful sense of God's presence and goodness to me an unworthy, unprofitable servant. I set off by myself to reach my preaching place, (if possible) but was too poorly when there, to say much. Having an appointment in the evening, after meeting the class, I set out with a friend, but was stopped by a thunder-gust before I could reach the intended place. I put in at a friend's and lay very unwell all night, but was blessed with sweet resignation, and could say from my very heart, good is the will of the Lord. Glory to God in the highest for all his dispensations to my poor soul.

[September 3, 1780] -- Sunday morning, I could hardly hold up my head, much less attend my appointment, but felt no murmuring, neither did I feel more than commonly happy, but I had power with humble confidence to stand still and see the salvation of God. I was enabled to praise his holy name in sickness as well as in health, in pain as well as at ease. As my sickness increased I was taken with a puking [vomiting], which gave a temporary relief, but was confined to my bed and room through the day.

[September 4, 1780] -- Monday. I found myself much in the same frame of mind, as since I have been poorly. My fever being nearly off, and anxious to get up with my appointments, which were getting considerably ahead of me, I got on with much difficulty to my kind friend G. Griffith's, who received me with all possible kindness, and helped me off my horse into his house and bed, sick as unto death. I never felt worse, or more like dying. I thought, and so did all around me, that I could not survive till morning. I was blessed with my senses as perfectly as at any time in my life. Death appeared awful, and I was brought to examine the state of my soul, and the doctrines I had been espousing, with the manner in which I had recommended them to others. God knows that I saw myself unworthy and unprofitable; yet I can testify that in that hour, if I could have had ten thousand lives instead of one, I would have preferred spending them all in traveling, and preaching that gospel, and espousing those truths which I now felt to be the power of God unto salvation. My only grief was that I had not been more faithful to the grace given me, in warning poor sinners of their danger, and living more holily in heart and life, since I had known the Lord. Although I believe there has not been a day since my conversion to God, but what I have enjoyed more or less, the light of his gracious countenance, yet if my Judge was to mark my many imperfections, I could not stand in his presence; for in His sight shall no flesh be justified. [Surely Watters meant here: "In His sight shall no flesh be justified," apart from the atoning blood of Christ.]. I was so weaned from the desire even of life and my nearest friends below, that my only wish was for the will of God to be done in and by me. I felt the Church of Christ and the salvation of poor sinners lay near my heart, and was enabled to cry to God for them with as much composedness as at any period of my life.

[September 8, 1780] -- Early on Friday morning I was greatly relieved by a large discharge of bile, and a little after sunrise got into a slumber for a few moments, and was better through the day. Late at night my wife came to me, having ridden nearly forty miles in a few hours. She and the friend that went for her, when they alighted at the door, expected to find me a corpse. We praised God together for the multitude of his favors, and rejoiced that we were in his gracious hands, and at his disposal. About twelve o'clock in the day my fever returned, and continued high through the night.

[September 12, 1780] -- Tuesday, I enjoyed much ease compared to what I had experienced for several days, and what is a much greater blessing, a heart to praise the Lord for his mercies unto me in the time of my greatest extremity. When at the worst, I was the happiest, and my tongue the most set at liberty to praise God, and exhort those around me to seek and serve the Lord. O! that this visitation may be every way sanctified to me and all around me.

[September 18, 1780] -- I continued to mend slowly and on the Monday following, in company with my wife and a friend, set out for home, and by making short stages was enabled to reach our journey's end. I continued very poorly for several weeks unable to attend my appointments, but through the uneasiness I felt in not being able to get anyone to fill my place, I went into my circuit before I had strength to encounter the fatigues thereof, which still kept me low and unable to do much for a long time.

My kind friends received me almost as one from the dead. In several neighborhoods they had heard that I was dead. After the autumn quarterly meeting, I again returned to Fairfax for a few weeks, but in a very poor state of health; yet for the most part able to fill my appointments.

[March 4, 1781] -- Sunday, fourth of March one thousand seven hundred and eighty one, I awoke with my mind, stayed on God, and much drawn out with desires to do and suffer his righteous will. I expected to preach to a large congregation, and was praying that the word of his grace, might have its desired effect on saints and sinners, but it pleased God to exercise me in a quite different manner, for before I had put on my clothes I was struck with a sudden pain in my back, and soon after with a sick stomach and an uneasiness in my bowels. I continued very poorly, and part of the time very ill till Saturday evening, when through the mercy of God I was as suddenly relieved as I was taken.

Through this affliction I found my mind stayed on the Rock of my salvation, and was several times peculiarly visited with divine sensation of the presence and love of God. I endured more pain and uneasiness in this affliction than in any or perhaps all that I remember ever having before, and I bless God that I was soon delivered out of it. I have no doubt but what my chastisements are sent for my good, and yet I have abundant cause to lament that I do not profit by them as might be expected. O! my poor, dull, backward, hard, unbelieving heart, how unwilling to be led or driven; yet I must not forget to praise God, and be thankful that by his grace I am what I am.

[March 11, 1781] -- Sunday the eleventh of March. Though unable to preach, yet I was able to attend at the house of prayer, and after hearing, a sermon, added a few words of exhortation, which perhaps had the more weight, coming from one from the gates of death. My heart was filled with love and my mouth with words. Merciful God! if thou art about to add a few more days to my mortal life, give me grace to be more faithful from this day.

[March 19, 1781 -- Figuring from the preceding dates, the following date should be Monday, March 19, and not Monday March 20. -- DVM] -- Monday, twentieth of March. Though still in a weak state of health, I set off with my friend John Tunnell, for Calvert County, Maryland. We stopped and preached at several places as we passed through Prince George's. We came exceedingly faint and weary, to our good old brother Gray's, on Friday evening. [March 23, 1781] -- I was so perfectly broken down that I could hardly sit in my chair.

[April 1, 1781] -- Sunday the first day of April, I preached for the first time in Calvert, and was much refreshed in spirit among a loving simple-hearted people, who received me as a servant of Jesus Christ. I preached again at four o'clock to a crowded audience, who paid great attention to the word. There is in this neighborhood for the time they have had the gospel among them, a large, lively, promising society.

[April 2, 1781] -- Monday, I enjoyed peace within and was blessed with freedom, in declaring the counsel of God to a listening multitude, several of whom have found Him of "whom Moses and the prophets have written, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of David." Truly the "fields appeared white already to harvest."

[April 3, 1781] -- Tuesday, I again had a crowded house and many of them evinced their desires of being taught the way of life and salvation. The Lord was very gracious in giving us his word plentifully. It might be said of many that were present: "Lo! they pray."

[April 4, 1781] -- Wednesday, I was informed that many of the great people of the earth threatened to do me in jury, if I attempted to preach at the appointed place, and was advised not to face them. No man laid hands on me, nor spake an unkind word; but nearly all appeared convinced of the truth of what they had heard, and several openly declared their approbation in plain and strong terms. I explained and applied the case of the blind man in the tenth chapter of St. Mark's gospel.

[April 6, 1781] -- Friday, I was feeble and very weak, but blessed with holy breathings after the conversion of my fellow creatures. My God! The work is thine. The residue of the spirit is with thee. Say the word and the work shall be done. Many were cut to the heart under the word. When I am weak, then I am strong. Here are in every neighborhood where I have been, many fair blossoms. O! that they may in due season bear fruit.

[April 7, 1781] -- Saturday, I preached in earnest and more alarming than since I came into these parts. It is truly animating to see the crowds from every quarter that attend, in deep, silent, solemn attention, while their weeping eyes, their anxious inquiries, show to all around that they are beginning to take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence.

[April 8, 1781] -- Sunday, I found my heart going out in continual prayer for the success of the gospel, the salvation of mankind in general, and, for those among whom I was laboring in particular, and confidently believed that I should see the arm of the Lord revealed on this day. I was strengthened in soul and in body, and enabled to cry aloud and spare not, and with much enlargement of heart explained and enforced to a large and attentive congregation, the necessity of regeneration, from our Lord's declaration to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again."

[April 9, 1781] -- Monday, I preached my last sermon in Calvert to many hundreds who expressed very great concern that I could not stay longer with them. The eagerness to hear and receive instructions among the poor blacks in these parts, is truly affecting, and exceeds any thing that I have ever seen in any place.

Calvert, though one of the first settled counties in Maryland, lying rather out of the way, has had very little gospel preaching from its first settlement till lately. They generally possess but little of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and are more like the publicans and sinners which our Lord said should go into the kingdom of heaven before those self-righteous persons.

[April 10, 1781] -- Tuesday, in company with my good brother Tunnel I set off for Fairfax, and the next day friend as we passed through Alexandria, all in an uproar, there being several English ships of war a little below and expected up every hour to land an army or to burn down the town. Men, women and children were flying in, almost every direction, endeavoring to secure their persons and property. So uncertain are all things on earth, and this ought to teach us the value of the true riches; those that are not corrupted by the moth, nor interrupted by thieves.

* * *

Thursday and Friday, the nineteenth and twentieth of April, was our quarterly meeting, Fairfax Circuit, Many of our preachers from below were with us on their way to the conference in Baltimore. It was a great and good time. We had lively, and excellent preaching, it appeared the more so perhaps to us, in these parts, as our brethren all came up with the Olive Branch of Peace. The dividing spirit being entirely banished from among them.

[April 22, 1781] -- Sunday. The whole neighborhood was in motion, for though the ships were fallen down the river, without doing us any considerable damage, the Marquis and his army, were pushing to the south with all possible speed, and had parties out in all directions pressing wagons and horses to expedite their flight. We all had to foot it to the chapel, and I preached mostly to our own society. Others were too much taken up with their fears and cares, to attend at this time to the concerns of eternity. It was a sweet and good time while we looked forward to that world, where wars and rumors of wars are no more. Sin! O cruel sin! The procuring cause of all evil. "And thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins." O glorious salvation! O happy people, saved of the Lord, who is like unto thee.

[April 23, 1781] -- Monday. In company with two of my brethren, I set out for the conference, Having ridden through a light rain for part of the afternoon, soon after we came to our lodgings. I was taken fainty and then with an ague, which was succeeded by a high fever through the night.

* * *

42 -- APRIL 24, 1781 -- CONFERENCE AT BALTIMORE

Tuesday, the twenty-fourth of April, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-one. Faint and exceedingly debilitated, yet able to sit on my horse, and being anxious to meet with my brethren once more before I go hence, I set off and about twelve o'clock, took my seat in conference, and was not a little comforted in finding all so united, in the bonds of the peaceable gospel of Jesus Christ. We rejoiced together that the Lord had broken the snare of the devil, and our disputes were all at an end.

[April 25, 1781] -- Wednesday, my affliction is greatly increased, and I am entirely confined to my bed in a high rheumatic fever, unable to turn, or lift a foot, or, hand; yet not in much misery, unless I am moved. O! how thankful ought I to be for kind friends in every place. I am at the house of my good friends George Styers and his wife, and my dear friends John and Sarah Hagerty, who reside under the same roof. By their great attention and disinterested love to me, by day and night, I am laid under such obligations, that I shall never forget while memory shall last. I was blessed also with such medical aid as I doubt that I could have had in any other part of the state, or in the state I came from. It was from doctor Weisenthal, who came regularly to see me once or twice a day, and I believe he did everything he could for my recovery.

On the latter end of the week the conference being risen, my brethren, before they left town, called to take their leave of me. Few, if any of them, expected to see me again, till we met in a better world where death and parting are no more. At parting with them, the language of my heart

was: I am, my gracious God, in thy hand. I am, through thy grace, willing to live or die. Thou knowest which, and what, is best for me. Not my will but thine be done. Mine eyes have seen thy salvation in healing the divisions that have been among us for these several years, and now what wait I for, but to depart in peace.

[April 29, 1781] -- Sunday. I am at least much easier, and feel conviction that I shall not at this time die; but live and declare the loving kindness of the Lord. -- Visited this evening by my friend Moore, I could not but observe a difference in his manner of praying for my recovery, and that of many who had prayed by and for me during my illness. They had prayed that this might be the case, if consistent with the Divine mind, which was all that I had found liberty to do myself; but he asked as though there was no manner of doubt of this, and as though he could not be denied. He certainly asked in faith, nothing doubting, and I do not know but what I felt an answer to his prayer before he rose from his knees.

[May 2, 1781] -- Wednesday. Able to stand on my feet once more, and my pains that have been nearly in all my joints, and also my fevers are greatly abated.

This is the third time within the last nine months, that all around me have expected that my days were nearly at an end, and that I should soon be numbered with the clods of the valley. Good is the will of the Lord. For all I desire to praise Him in time and in eternity.

[May 6, 1781] -- Sunday. I was, through mercy, once more able to attend at the house of prayer, and heard three of my brethren at different times of the day, preach three sermons, and I dropped a few words of exhortation.

[May 7-8, 1781] -- Monday and Tuesday I rode home, where I was confined for some time, not able to travel nor even to preach, during which time I often longed to be able to go to my appointments, deliberately believing traveling and preaching, to be the most desirable life on earth. I fear living to be burdensome to the Lord. Increase my faith.

* * *

43 -- NEAR JUNE, 1781 -- WENT TO BALTIMORE CIRCUIT

Towards the beginning of June, I went into Baltimore Circuit again, my wife making her home at my brother's.

[June 3, 1781 -- *Figuring from previous dates, this was Sunday, June 3, 1781, not June 5.] -- Sunday, the fifth* of June, the Lord was very gracious while I was addressing the people on a funeral occasion. I think this poor hardened neighborhood has one more loud call. O! that they may hear, that their souls may live. For six weeks past I have preached only three times; but I bless God it has been for the want of strength, and not for the want of a willing mind. I found myself so poorly that I preached but once more this week. I find it remarked in my daily memorandum that I never found myself more willing to preach the gospel, yea, that I could hardly refrain from coveting strength for this desirable purpose, while I could not but pity those who could, but did not. O! I

wish to make full proof of my ministry, and pray that after I have preached to others, I may not become a cast away.

[June 10, 1781 -- *Figuring from previous dates, this was Sunday, June 10, 1781, not June 12.] -- Sunday the twelfth* of June, I ventured to take the circuit, and in the fullness and warmth of my heart held out a crucified Saviour to my fellow men. I continued to recover my strength slowly so that I was able to give constant attendance to my appointments, and the concerns of the different societies. I found many held fast the beginning of their confidence and were still pressing forward; and we had various instances of those who found the Lord, and of others who professed to find the work of grace deepened in them, but those instances were not so numerous, nor did they appear to be attended with that power as when I last rode the circuit. I was glad to find through the year, that so much peace and good order reigned through the circuit in all the societies in town and country. My labor was too great for my strength, and I could not spare nor nurse myself as many thought I should. I have often thought I would preach short sermons, speak low and deliberately, but seldom could effect it.

* * *

44 -- FALL OF 1781

Early in the fall my weak debilitated state prepared me for the ague and fever, which I had every third day very violently, till I was so reduced that it was with the greatest difficulty I kept round my circuit. Medicine was of little or no account without rest, and the greatest attention to my manner of living. Such attention, I could not consent to as long as I could go, unless I could get some one to take my place, which I had not been able to do.

* * *

45 -- APRIL, 1782

Having struggled through the winter, and at last obtained help on which I could depend; in the beginning of April, by making short stages, I once more visited Philadelphia, and agreed with a friendly man to print me three thousand copies of the life and death of my brother-in-law, William Adams. From thence I visited my friends in several places of the Jerseys. I found them generally well and in a prosperous way in religion. At the New Mills I thought it very extraordinary that seven years before I had left a large society, and now found all alive, and but one of them had in that time left the society. They had become double or treble the number. -- I moved slowly but found I was obliged to preach oftener among my old friends than I wished, for my ague and fever attended me as constantly as the day.

After my return, I only preached occasionally till the following conference, but with all the care and attention I was capable of, I found but little alteration, so that my days rolled round to little purpose as respected the public good.

* * *

46 -- MAY 21, 1782 -- CONFERENCE IN BALTIMORE

Our conference began the twenty-first of May, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-two, in Baltimore. After it was over, in company with several I returned to Virginia, and in a few days set out for Fluvanna Circuit, afflicted with the ague, but still desirous to do a little in the Lord's vineyard before I dropped into the dust. I found myself very much exhausted in riding ninety miles in two days to get into my circuit. I felt exceedingly [emotional, or torn] at parting with my wife in so poor a state of health, and was very much dissatisfied with the conference for giving me a station so difficult to fill and so far from home. I had my doubts whether I ought not to stay at home; but in all doubtful cases I concluded if I did err, it was best to err on the safe side. Therefore with my life in my hand, and trusting in the kind providence of God, I took up my cross and once more left all to preach the gospel. "Lo! I am with you unto the end of the world."

In most of the societies I found a few humble, happy souls, who stood as way-marks to Zion with whom I was greatly refreshed. The rides were long and a great part of the circuit very mountainous, enough to have tired a much stronger constitution. Our prospects out of the society were not very flattering, but in several places we had an increase of members. Bro. Cromwell, who rode with me, labored hard and diligently, but was often much discouraged, and even dejected.

* * *

47 -- LAST QUART. MEETING 1782-83 -- APPOINTED TO HANOVER CIRCUIT

At our last quarterly meeting we had a good time, after which we gladly committed our friends to God and the word of his grace, hoping that our successors would be made a much greater blessing than we had been.

My next appointment was in Hanover Circuit, as far from home, and nearly as laborious, as the one I just left, my ague still continuing, though much abated to what it was twelve months ago.

My long affliction and the difficulties that I met with in those two circuits, made me first think of locating, for I was fully convinced that unless I could be indulged [with respite and rest], I must finally sink under the fatigue which attended my going so far from home.

I have often thought my going to those appointments, among the unhappiest circumstances of my life.

* * *

48 -- MAY 27, 1783 -- CONF. AT BALTIMORE -- APPOINTED TO CALVERT CIRCUIT

The following spring I bought a spot of ground, that if I could not be able to continue traveling, I might have a place to retire to, but attended the conference in Baltimore the twenty-seventh of May, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three, and took my appointment in Calvert Circuit, where I labored with considerable satisfaction and success till the fall a when

having made up my mind, I began making some preparations on my place to receive my family, and in the latter end of December [1783] following removed them to it, where they have remained to the present. Since then I have been sometimes employed as a traveling preacher, but mostly as a local preacher.

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PART FIFTH -- 1784 -- 1801

[Even though Watters introductory statement for this chapter includes the year 1783, actually, the events related by him in this part of the book commence with the year 1784. -- DVM] -- From my location in one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three, to my entering, the traveling connection again, in one thousand eight hundred and one.

* * *

49 -- 1784

The following year one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four, we had but one preacher appointed to our circuit, and though I was just beginning the world as a house-keeper, I rode, I believe, for a considerable part of the year, as much in the circuit as the preacher who was appointed to it. I attended Greenwich preaching house, forty miles from me every fourth Sabbath, and Leesburg, thirty miles off every fourth Sabbath, besides the places between me and those above-mentioned:-- and though I was much fatigued in so doing, being still in a weak state of health, yet I found the Lord's service to be perfect freedom, and feared living to no good purpose.

My hopes, my fears, my desires, and my intentions have been the same in a located state as in a traveling state, but my opportunities of doing, and receiving good, I have often found widely different. I never had a thought of settling to get riches, or anything that the world can afford, and had it pleased God to have continued my health, and no other impediment had arisen, I should have continued in the traveling ministry, for I had when I located, and have to this day, the same attachment to the traveling connections as at any period of my life.

Though I have no wish to justify my conduct in becoming local to escape censure; yet I think it has been a means of restoring my health, and lengthening out my days, which although they have been, and I fear will still be, spent to too little purpose; yet have I the testimony of a good conscience that in every state, and under all the vicissitudes of life, I have never, since I first knew the Lord seen anything in this world worth living an hour for, but to prepare and assist others to prepare, for, that glorious kingdom, which shall be revealed at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I have never had one wish from the day of my conversion to become rich and great in this world. I have long since read and in many instances seen, that, "they that will be rich, fall into many temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." "For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Through the grace of God I did ever prefer, and still do prefer, Agur's prayer to any other in temporals, as I believe men in that state are not only the most likely to receive the gospel, but to adorn their profession, and finally to meet with the approbation of the Judge of all the earth: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Nothing on earth is worth a thought, only in relation to the great and glorious end, of our creation and redemption by Jesus Christ, the Lord our righteousness. Although I have been under the necessity of paying more attention to worldly matters than before I settled, (for I have but a poor opinion of a lazy professor) yet it has been my cross so to do, lamenting that I have not been more employed in spirituals [spiritual things].

In the autumn following, doctor Coke, came over with two other preachers, and with Mr. Wesley's advice respecting the administering the ordinances, which we had laid before him, and on which he had delayed giving us his opinion until now. He had viewed the subject as a very weighty one, and was unwilling to say anything one way or the other, till he had deliberately and fully made up his mind.

* * *

50 -- DECEMBER 25, 1784 -- CHRISTMAS CONF. ORG. OF THE M. E. CHURCH

On the twenty-fifth of December, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four, our conference met in Baltimore, to consider the plan of church government, which the doctor brought over recommended by Mr. Wesley. It was adopted, and unanimously agreed to with great satisfaction, and we became instead of a religious society, a separate church under the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

This change gave great satisfaction through all our societies in America, and the more so, as it met with the approbation of our European brethren, and particularly to those who had some time past thought it their duty to administer the ordinances, but had desisted therefrom, rather than rend the flock of Christ; as also to those who had long felt scruples of conscience in receiving them from men that they could not believe were sent by the Lord Jesus to minister in holy things, many of whose lives were immoral.

* * *

I will here take the liberty of giving an extract of a letter, a copy of which I have by me. [a letter written by William Watters]

To Mr. B_____
March, 1806

My dear Brother,

That there should be those who through prejudice think the Methodists, since they have had bishops among them, are quite a different people, is not strange. But is it not strange, that any who have known them from the beginning, should admit such a thought, 'till they have investigated the matter thoroughly? All must know that names do not alter the nature of things. We have from the beginning had one among us who has superintended the whole work. At first this person was solely appointed by Mr. Wesley, and called the General Assistant -- at a time when there was none but European preachers on the continent. But why was the name of General Assistant, ever changed? All that will open their eyes may know why. The Methodists in England and in America, formerly did not call themselves a particular church, but a religious society in connection with different churches, mostly with the Episcopal church.

After the Revolutionary War, the Episcopal clergy became very scarce, and in far the greatest number of our societies, we had no way of receiving the ordinances of baptism and the Lords supper. It was this that led many of our preachers, as you well know, to take upon them the administration of the ordinances. Mr. Rankin, who was our first General Assistant, after staying the time in this country he came for, returned home. This was at a time when we had no intercourse with England, and Mr. Asbury, the only old preacher that determined (in those perilous times,) to give up his parents, country and all his natural connections, was finally and unanimously chosen by the preachers (assembled in conference,) our General Assistant.

He continued such, until the year 1784, when the doctor came over, and not only the name of General Assistant was changed to that of Superintendent, but we formed ourselves into a separate church. This change was proposed to us by Mr. Wesley, after we had craved his advice on the subject but [the change] could not take effect till adopted by us which was done in a deliberate, formal manner, at a conference called for that purpose in which there was not one dissenting voice. Everyone of any discernment, must see from Mr. Wesley's circular letter on this occasion, as well, as from every part of our mode of church government, that we openly and avowedly declared ourselves Episcopalians [those who had adopted the episcopal form of church government]; though the doctor and Mr. Asbury, were called superintendents.

After a few years, the name from Superintendent was changed to Bishop. But from first to last, the business of General Assistant, Superintendent, or Bishop, has been the same. Only since we have become a distinct church, he has, with the assistance of two or three elders ordained our ministers, whose business is to preside in our conferences, and in case of an equal division on a question, he has the casting vote; but in no instance whatever, has he a negative, as you are told. He has also the stationing of all the traveling preachers, under certain limitations. Which power, as it is given him by the general conference, so it can be lessened, or taken from him at any time conference sees fit. But while he superintends the whole work he cannot interfere with the particular charge of any of the preachers in their stations. To see that the preachers fill their places with propriety, and to understand the state of every station, or circuit, that he may the better make the appointments of the preachers, is no doubt, no small part of his duty; but he has nothing to do with receiving, censuring, or excluding members. This belongs wholly to the stationed preacher and members.

His power I confess is great, but let it be well observed, that it entirely respects the traveling preachers, and none else. It never can from the nature of things, be put into the hands of

any man, but one in whom the whole have the highest confidence, and that no longer than he faithfully executes his trust. I know of no way the preachers can be as well stationed, as by one that goes through the whole work, and is without his local prejudices in favor of, or against any place: as he seldom stays longer in one place than another. The whole body of preachers in conference cannot station themselves, I am well assured; and a committee chosen by them for that purpose, would find many insurmountable difficulties: as they could have but a very superficial knowledge of the particular gifts of many of the preachers, or [knowledge of the] state of many of the circuits.

The sacrifice that a preacher makes in giving up his choice, and going wherever he is appointed, is not small. But no one is worthy of the name of a traveling preacher, that does not cheerfully go anywhere he can, for the general good. If he is so circumstanced, that he cannot go anywhere, and everywhere that is thought best, he should say so, when he first offers himself to conference. If it so happens, after he has been traveling, he ought to let it be known as soon as possible; and whenever he cannot be accommodated, with a circuit that he can fill, he ought to be contented to stop, till he can.

You will say, this is the hardships I complain of. Every station in life has its difficulties. But this cannot be remedied in the present state of things. It is then our duty to do the best we can, under unavoidable difficulties. Better many individuals suffer, than the work at large should. I would rather be in the more general work; yet if circumstances prevent, let me be content, to act in some humble way. As for my own part, I am so fearful of seeing the traveling connection clogged, with the local preachers, that I never wish a seat in conference, as a member, unless I can fill some proper station. They can do well enough without my weak counsel, while I withhold my labors, whether I do it willingly or through necessity.

But a greater charge than the love of power has been brought against Mr. Asbury; (though I believe only by a few) even that of the love of money. I think a devil ought to blush (if it were possible) at such a charge. Where is all that he has been heaping up for near these forty years? I confess if this was his object, he has stood so high in the estimation of many that he might have accumulated considerably by this time. But is it so? Where is it?

I have been as long, and as intimately acquainted with him as most men in America, and I must give this testimony. Of all men that I have known he is in my estimation, the clearest of the love of money, and the most free to give away his all, in every sense of the word. I ask Mr. Asbury's pardon for taking this liberty in defending a character, that speaks louder for itself than many such witnesses can for it; but the time and place I live in shall be my apology for so doing.

I am as ever yours, &c.
Wm. Watters

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51 -- 1786 -- CONFERENCE IN ABINGDON -- BRIEF TIME ON BERKELEY CIRCUIT

Being considerably recovered from my long debilitated state of health, and one of my brothers agreeing to take the charge and care of my family, in the spring one thousand seven

hundred and eighty six, I attended conference in Abingdon, and received an appointment in Berkeley circuit. The first of June I left my little all and went into my circuit, beginning at Milburn's chapel. I labored with considerable success among a loving, humble people, and many all round the circuit came out and appeared well exercised. The prospect was very flattering and I began to hope I should see good days and be a means of leading many to the Lord Jesus Christ; when to my great surprise, I was under the disagreeable necessity of leaving my circuit before I had been in it two quarters, and returning to my family; my brother being strangely led away with the notion of setting up business in another neighborhood. My way now appeared entirely hedged up, and I was more mortified and uneasy, than if I had not gone out at all.

* * *

52 -- VISITED RICHARD OWEN FOR THE LAST TIME

On my way home, I saw my old friend and fellow laborer, Richard Owen, in Leesburg dangerously ill, and it proved the last time of my seeing him, for in a few days he resigned up his soul into the hands of his merciful God. He was the first American Methodist preacher, though for many years he acted only as a local preacher. [While Richard Owen did travel some here and there to preach, we can make this distinction: Owen was the first American-born Methodist preacher; Watters was the first American-born regular, Itinerant preacher.] He was awakened under the preaching of Robert Strawbridge, a local preacher from Ireland, who with one more, Philip Embury, were the first Methodist preachers in America.

He [Richard Owen] was a man of a respectable family, of good natural parts, and of considerable utterance. Though encumbered with a family, he often left wife, and children, and a comfortable living, and went into many distant parts, before we had any traveling preachers among us, and without fee or reward, he freely published that gospel to others, which he had happily found to be the power of God unto his own salvation. After we had regular circuit preachers among us, he as a local preacher was ever ready to fill up a gap, and by his continuing to go into neighborhoods where they had no preaching, he was often the means of opening the way for enlarging old circuits, or forming new circuits in different places.

Several years before his dissolution, after his children were grown up, and able to attend to his family concerns, he gave himself up entirely to the work of the ministry, and finished his course in Leesburg, Fairfax circuit, in the midst of many kind friends, but some distance from his family. As his last labors were in the circuit where I lived, I had frequent opportunities of being in his company, both in public and in private, and had every reason to believe that he had kept himself unspotted from the world, and that he had the salvation of souls much at heart. I wish it was in my power to hold him up in his real character, as an example to our present race of local preachers.

Plain in his dress -- plain in his manners -- industrious and frugal, he bore a good part of the burden and heat of the day, in the beginning of that work which has since so gloriously spread through this happy continent, and he was as anxious to be a general blessing to mankind as too many now are to get riches, and make a show in the world. I shall need make no apology for giving this short account of so worthy a man to any who knew him. I have been led to it from my long and

particular acquaintance with him, and there not having been (I am sorry to say it) a more public account of him. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them."

Being returned home to my family, I entertained but small hopes of being able to give any assistance in the traveling connection, for some time, if ever, but continued in my located sphere, to assist the preachers around both in the towns and different circuits in some small measure. My success has not been equal to my wishes, yet the Lord has in his infinite mercy been pleased to own, at different places and at various times my feeble endeavors to the conviction and conversion of poor sinners. We have had around us, since I have been settled, two or three considerable revivals of religion, and some few who were the subjects of them have turned out well; but far the greater part of them otherwise: so that from this quarter many have received their prejudices, or had them confirmed. I have often been wounded to think that such and such once professed so and so. I know of nothing of which I have been more ashamed before an ungodly world, than of such apostate souls.

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53 -- DECEMBER 25, 1788 -- DEATH OF WATTERS' MOTHER-IN-LAW

My wife's mother, Mrs. Ann Adams, departed this life December the twenty-fifth, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight, after being in a very weak state for several years. She was in my estimation, one of the best of women; and I have no doubt that she rests from all her sufferings, which for several years were not a few. She was among the first in Fairfax that were convinced and converted under Methodist preaching, in the year [1773] one thousand seven hundred and seventy-three. She had attended the Church of England, (of which she was a member) and for some time had been sensible of a diffidence in all that she heard there. She soon heartily welcomed the word of the Lord to her heart, and felt it as a two-edged sword in cutting her off from every sin, and from trusting any longer in her own righteousness.

From her first being convinced, she showed a firmness and a determination that nothing could conquer. She pressed forward, and took the Kingdom as by storm. It was her great grief that she could not for some time have the pleasure of opening her door, as well as her heart, to entertain the servants of the Lord who brought her the glad tidings of salvation. When she was thus far gratified, and she could administer to their wants under her own roof, she was not contented without their having also the liberty of preaching the gospel to her family, and neighbors. It was so, the Lord opened the heart of her companion, and their house was constantly a preaching place, till there was a house built for that purpose. From that day to the day of her death, there never was one of them in her house that she ever omitted doing everything for in her power, that she knew would be conducive to their good or comfort.

She was a mother in our Israel. On all occasions, all around her felt her sympathy and Christian affection. In the course of her pilgrimage she made, through the grace of God, a considerable progress in the divine life. The word of the Lord was to her more than tens of thousands of gold and silver. Her constancy, and perseverance in attending prayer meetings, and all other religious meetings, exceeded any woman I have ever known. For better than thirteen years

that I was intimately acquainted with her, I never saw anything like her being weary in well doing, in the least degree. She was frequent and fervent in prayer, and watching, with fasting. She was of few words, but of a remarkably cheerful spirit, the very reverse of what anyone would suppose who scarcely knew her. She was serious, not sad -- cheerful, not light. She, with her husband, and four eldest children, were all convinced of sin within a few months of one another. Her son William, the youngest of the four, died the third day of December, [1799] one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, about eight months after being received into the traveling connection. A short account of his life and death, I published soon after his death. He was a young man of a thousand.

Her eldest daughter, Ann Minor, wife of George Minor, departed this life in December, [1786] one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six, in the thirty fourth year of her age. She looked like the picture of health, and long life; but she was cut off in a few days by a violent fever that appeared to be contagious. It was thought that the contagion was brought into the family by a Negro girl. My wife and I were with her constantly for two or three days and nights before she died. She was patient, resigned, and very affectionate to all about her. She did not rejoice at the approach of her dissolution as some have done, yet expressed nothing like fear; but a calm, humble reliance on the Lord, and Saviour Jesus Christ. She was not willing that we should leave her, or that anyone else should lift, or attend her in her last moments.

Her eldest son (Samuel) was a married man when he first embraced religion, and soon after began preaching the gospel. He possessed considerable preaching abilities, with a good utterance and a graceful delivery. In the early part of his life he traveled, more or less, for several years; but as his family concerns increased, he declined that entirely for many years. He departed this life August the seventh, [1805] one thousand eight hundred and five, after an illness of a few days, that appeared in no way alarming, until two or three days before his death. At different times during his illness, and to different friends, he professed confidence in God, and resignation to his will. He was a little beyond fifty years of age, a remarkably well and healthy-looking man. My wife, the most sickly of the four, above-mentioned, is the only one of them now living.

Mrs. Adams had six younger children -- four sons and two daughters -- ten in all -- all of whom she lived to see nearly grown up to age. Her youngest daughter (Margaret) was converted a little before her mother's death, and for a considerable time adorned her profession, and made her exit the seventeenth day of March, [1805] one thousand eight hundred and five, leaving eight small children behind. Her end, it is said by those present, was triumphant. She shouted aloud and gave glory to God, till within a few breaths of her last! The evening before she was walking in her garden, and she was a corpse before the dawn of next morning. "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." How happy a circumstance, that she had oil in her vessel with her lamp, and was therefore ready to meet her Bridegroom, to enter in before the door was shut.

Although Mrs. Adams was greatly comforted in seeing several of her younger children brought to know the Lord, a little before her departure; yet she had hard struggling, and fighting, through the latter part of her pilgrimage, and for two years was never free from pain, or weakness. I with my wife frequently visited her, during her bad state of health, and we were both with her on the night of her death. We had no hopes of her recovery; yet did not think her end was so nigh. A

little before day, she felt herself change for death, and told us so, with all the expressions of joy and triumph.

Hearing this, Mr. Adams who had laid down the same room, said he would get up. Yes, said she -- get up and see the last of your poor dust. I asked her if her prospects were clear, and whether she was going to the Lord. Her answer was surprising, for one worn down to a mere shadow. It was expressive of the greatest confidence; and then with a voice to be heard across several rooms, she cried -- Glory, glory, glory to God, for his mercy and love, to my soul; and that He is about just now, to take me to himself. She then, with the utmost affection, in calm recollection, (and as well in her senses as I ever saw her), reached out her hand to each one in the room, bidding each a final farewell: adding either a word of advice or thanks.

She held my hand for a considerable while, and with a pleasant earnest look, full in my face, she thanked me for all the blessings I had been a means of administering to her; and prayed that God would reward me for the same. I felt so little, and so confounded, at being thus addressed by a dying, saint, and a mother, that if it had been possible I could have sunk through the floor. She had scarcely done speaking to all around, before we saw evidently that in a few minutes she would be no more. We fell on our knees, and committed her soul to God, with fervent wishes that we might be as well prepared to meet the Lord. She died so easy that we did not know when she drew her last breath. So lived and so died this worthy good woman, in the fifty-sixth year of her age. -- "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

I have learned from experience that though a traveling preacher has, in most particulars, far the advantage of obtaining useful knowledge, and of being useful, yet, not so in all things. The traveling preacher that comes into, and passes through a neighborhood, and especially in a time of a revival, generally sees the best side of professors, but the local preacher who resides among them has an opportunity of taking into view the whole of their conduct, and from his more intimate knowledge (if a man of attention and observation), he can suit their particular cases beyond what anyone can who lacks such information.

The same observation I have often made with regard to the irreligious. I never found myself better furnished with arguments for attacking and convincing sinners, than while in a located situation, and such as I lived in the midst of. I have heard it observed by some that their particular calling in life so exposed them to the company of the wicked, that they could not preach to them with the same freedom as before. Hence I have made it a point never to go among such, without real business, and then not to stay longer than was actually necessary. I have my doubts whether this is necessarily the case in pursuing any lawful calling, and that when ever it so happens, it is owing to unfaithfulness or imprudence, or both. But should it be necessarily the case with any calling, then I would immediately quit it, though the most profitable in the world, rather than not be able to meet my bitterest enemy in the pulpit, before God and the congregation.

Although a traveling ministry is in my estimation one of the greatest blessings with which a people can be blessed, and to be commissioned to go to the ends of the earth, to deliver the glad tidings of the gospel salvation to saints and sinners, is the greatest honor ever conferred on mortal man. Yet, a local ministry has undoubtedly its use. In the purest ages of the Church, the local ministry was by the Lord joined to a traveling ministry, and though they have often been divided,

yet it ought never to be the case. Hence there ought to be the greatest attention in the government of every church, so as to unite and settle these two particular spheres of action in such a manner as for neither to clog the other, much less, destroy the other. I know of no plan adopted by any of the Reformed Churches, or any that could be adopted to equal ours.

Hence we see the success that has attended it from the beginning, and we need not wonder that restless, designing spirits should be so uneasy under it, for no part of our discipline as it respects our ministry, has any respect to individuals, but the general good is the object throughout. The man that commences as a traveling preacher, humanly speaking, makes a great sacrifice to leave all, and has not the least hope of any greater worldly compensation, than barely food and raiment, and that only while he is able to fill his appointment. The man that acts as a local preacher, however, as pressing as his wants of a worldly nature may be, has no dependence on one shilling for any services among us; while perhaps his gifts are such that he could command his hundreds elsewhere.

These are trying circumstances, and if the preacher has any object in view but the glory of God in the salvation of souls, he can hardly stand his ground long. Hence one and another have turned their backs on us, after making the most public declarations of their attachments; and though many have rejoiced to draw off such from us, and many mourned their loss, yet I am well satisfied that this is one means of purging our ministry, both local and traveling, and as such, has had a blessed tendency to keep us of the same spirit of which we were in the beginning of the work.

I have found that a local preacher's sphere of action is much more extensive than I thought it was before I tried it. And though I much prefer that of a traveling preacher; yet I think the great thing is in either state to be instant in season, and out of season endeavoring to do all we possibly can in so good a cause, taking care not to pull down with one hand any part of what we build up with the other. This is a sore evil whenever it happens, from which, may the Lord deliver us all.

Since my time has been spent mostly at, and about home, I have often been called upon to attend death beds, and frequently by those who in the general tenor of their lives thought but little about preparing for death.

* * *

54 -- THE REMARKABLE OF LEWIS HIPKIN'S SICKNESS AND DEATH

Among the many, in any part of my life, that I have attended, none has appeared to me so remarkable, nor so affecting as the last illness and death of Mr. Lewis Hipkins. A few days after his dissolution, I wrote an account thereof to Mr. B____, an extract of which follows:

Dear Sir,

You have no doubt before this been informed of the death of Mr. Hipkins. I have, with many others, been a spectator of this most affecting and very instructive scene. It is now something better than twelve years since he married my wife's sister, about which time our acquaintance began. He was then, and for some time after, a pretty constant attendant at our chapel, and was at

times under good impressions. As he got into business and company, his serious impressions wore off, and for several years past, I have too much reason to fear, he had his doubts of all revealed religion, yet not so, as openly to avow it. Our friendship as neighbors and connections was entire from our first acquaintance. He took particular pleasure, I always thought, in obliging me.

Last February, as I was recovering from a dangerous illness, I found my friend's salvation much on my mind, and in the fullness of my heart, wrote to him on the momentous subject without reserve. He immediately sent me the following answer, which will show that his mind was still open to conviction:

"I am glad to hear you are so far recovered from your late illness, as to be (I trust) out of danger. Your admonitions I take as a friendly pledge of the goodness of your heart towards me, as I have always done in every instance of the sort, and always was obliged to you for everything of the kind, as I am well satisfied they flow from a pure principle. I cannot so well express to you the language of my heart, but believe me, my dear Sir, to be very affectionately,"

"Your assured friend, &c.
Lewis Hipkins, February 11, 1794."

On the 3d or 4th of last June, (1794) he was bitten by a mad dog, just as he stepped out of the boat at Georgetown Ferry. On hearing thereof, I felt much alarmed, and went immediately to see him. I found him very serious, and I believe full of thought. He had been with a doctor, and had sent to a Dutch doctor in Pennsylvania, concerning whom he had received several letters from different gentlemen in Georgetown, assuring him of the infallibility of the medicine which, with the encouragement his friendly physician had given him, kept him in pretty good spirits.

On that week I went to see him again, and to my great dissatisfaction found him too confident that all was well, that the sentence of death was postponed, so that, though he had sent so far, and had the medicine so well recommended, he had not taken it, nor could I prevail on him so to do. I entreated him to take the medicine, observing that in all such cases, though we hope for the best, we ought to prepare for the worst. He said he would take the greatest care of the medicine, and if he perceived the least approach of the complaint he would take it immediately.

On Wednesday the twenty-third of July, he was taken with a stretching, and a light chilliness, something like the approach of the ague and fever. Thursday, he continued much the same. Friday, he was worse and took to his bed, and although, I expect, he had his fears, yet it does not appear that he knew his complaint till in the fore part of the night, being prevailed upon to take a sup of tea (for he had taken nothing all day,) as he put the cup to his lips and attempted to sip, he first perceived the hydrophobia [hydrophobia = a morbid aversion to water, esp. as a symptom of rabies in man, or rabies, esp. in man -- Oxford Dict.] on him, and throwing his hand and cup from his mouth, fell back on the bed, and as soon as he could well speak told his wife it was all over with him. He suffered violent pain between his shoulders, and in his breast, and thought he could not possibly live till morning.

Saturday morning before I was out of my bed, a messenger came for me in all possible haste. When I entered his [Lewis Hipkins'] room, he expressed himself very glad that I was come.

After he was a little composed, I inquired how he was, and for a few minutes thought that nothing had been the matter but a violent fit of the colic. But it was not long before I knew better. And O awful! shall I ever forget the complaint he poured into my ears? When I could have taken the medicine from the Dutch doctor I would not; now I fain would but cannot. I have no will by me. All my worldly matters are in a very unsettled state.

As to eternity -- he paused -- all left undone! O bewitching world that anything should keep creatures of a day from first seeking the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. My God, what sympathy, fear, and deep concern did my bleeding heart feel in that moment, lest the grieved Spirit, and long neglected Saviour now should say, for none of those that were bidden (and made light of the invitation) shall taste of my supper. After the morning he spent the rest of the day chiefly in settling his worldly business, and it was truly surprising how well in his mind he was preserved, and how much he was enabled to go through.

His kind and affectionate doctor continued by him throughout the night, and did all in his power; but it was too late, his complaint was out of the reach of medicine at this stage, if not from the first. He rested quite easy, and slept the greater part of the night when we were not doing something for him. He was blistered nearly all over his body, and took much medicine internally, and though it had no effect in saving or perhaps in prolonging his life, yet I am inclined to think it had a good effect in keeping him longer in his right mind, and lessening his misery, or at least he complained less of acute pain after he began taking medicine plentifully, till a little before his last.

Sunday morning he thought himself much better and gave God thanks, telling me that he had brought him as from the gates of death. I now told him I was going to ride home for a few minutes, which he absolutely refused, telling me that though I had twenty appointments I should not attend one of them that day. But after understanding that I would assuredly return in an hour or two, he reluctantly consented. When I returned about eight o'clock, I found him past taking any more medicine, and in a most distressed and affecting condition indeed. He could not bear any kind of liquid to be near him, without being in the utmost panic and torture imaginable. Still, he knew everyone, and would answer any question and converse on any subject.

He frequently told me that he hoped that all good people would pray for him. The doctor had been taking off his blister plasters, and was about to tie the handkerchief that went around his body, on his breast -- he started and refused to let him, for fear (he said) he should bite him. The doctor replied -- no -- you will not bite me. He added, God bless you, I would not for the world; but I am afraid I shall do it involuntarily. He then caught up a handkerchief and held it between his mouth and the doctor's hands while he tied the knot. He frequently requested that we would confine him with ropes, lest he should hurt some of us. -- But I never perceived any thing like an attempt to bite, or injure anyone.

As his convulsions became more violent, the doctor directed me to appoint four strong men and place two on each side of the bed, to prevent his rising, to keep the clothes over and to watch him in all his movements. He started suddenly (as he frequently did) and calling me by name, told me: "_____ was not to blame that I did not take the Dutch doctors' medicine. He gave me free leave. No one is to blame but myself."

My heart and eyes were continually so full that I hardly knew how to contain myself in his room, without once in a while withdrawing a few minutes, which whenever he perceived, he was sure to have me sent for. Mrs. Hipkins being in the next room, he requested her to tell me to come to him. When I approached his bedside, he told me that the doctor's skill, and the power of medicine all failed, and that he wanted me to try what prayer would do.

The doors were closed with a few only in the room. The rest (for by this time many had gathered) were in the passage and in the other room, while we attempted to prostrate ourselves before the most high God in humble prayer, and supplication for the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul. I felt no particular answer but had enjoyed a sweet sense of the divine presence from the time of my first coming to him, with a hope that all would be ordered for the best, and would end well.

Some time after, he called me to come nigh him. He said something but I knew not what, and I made him no answer. He asked if I did not hear him. I told him I did not. He desired that I would come near him and not be afraid. When I was seated on his bedside, he informed me that he had always had a very great regard for me, and was heartily sorry, that though we had lived so near each other, we had not been more united in serving God; but added, that had been his fault. He then mentioned my last letter to him, with something of the effect it had on him. Mrs. Hipkins has since his death, told me that it was very perceivable that he was not a little affected with the above mentioned letter.

When I first came to him, I observed that when his pains were violent, he would call on God to have mercy on him; but I also observed that I never heard him mention the precious name of Jesus, till this morning about nine o'clock, and from that hour he owned and called on the name of Jesus as though he felt the truth of the apostle's assertion. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

About three or four o'clock in the afternoon, I was standing by his bed side when he fell into a violent agony of soul and body. He cried out aloud, "Will none of you, pray for me? What! will none of you pray one word for me?"

I was awfully struck, and fell on my knees with many others around his bed side, and began crying to God in behalf, of his salvation. The clouds burst, and the very heavens appeared to open with blessings, and the power of God's Spirit was felt by many present, who knew the Lord, and we continued for some time to implore the divine blessing on our friend.

I, from this moment, felt such a pleasing hope that God would save his soul that I could cheerfully resign him up to the divine disposal, believing with an increasing confidence that all would end well. When we arose from our knees, we all stood around his bed in a flood of tears, and heard with admiration how his tongue was loosened to pray, and exhort all present.

His words for some time were a mixture of prayer, praise, and exhortation. He told us over and over, that he was just going to Heaven, and begged that we would all follow on and meet him there. He now said to his wife, "My dear Sukey, pray to God Almighty for my soul, and for your

own soul, and for the souls of _____ and if you should ever have another husband, I pray God he may be a better one to you than ever I have been; and don't be in too great a hurry about it."

He declared that God had plucked him as a brand from the burning, and frequently said he was going to Heaven. Holding me by the hand, he sometimes called me his spiritual father -- his father in Christ -- his God-father -- and the good old veteran that had been long in the field.

His mind at this moment ran much on not turning back, (as he expressed it) to the flesh-pots of Egypt. I felt myself at a loss to know whether this arose from his having formerly lost his desires of salvation; and his turning again to his vanities and sins, or whether it arose from seeing some of his acquaintances present, that he had too much cause to believe to be in such a state. I rather suppose the latter. His words came from him with life and feeling, as from his very heart, and though he had never made religion his study, yet did he speak more feelingly of divine truths than many who make it the business of their lives.

Though his language was scriptural, yet his having neglected the scriptures was plain to one acquainted with them, for though he often repeated parts of texts, yet it was seldom he could repeat one verse correctly. When ever I would repeat to him any part of holy writ, applicable to what he was saying, he would receive it with all possible eagerness, running before me in the repetition. When I would assist him in prayer as I stood by his bed, frequently offering up short sentences for him, he would with the greatest sincerity and fervor of soul cry out with a loud voice -- "Amen!" -- and some times -- "Amen! Amen! -- and I say, Amen!"

He said "the spirit is willing" -- I answered, "but the flesh is weak." -- He replied, "I think it is too strong." -- I added, "too weak to do good, but too strong in doing evil." He eagerly said -- "Ah! That's it -- that's it."

To an old acquaintance he said: "O Tommy! how often we have spent our time walking about the fields, scheming for the world; but we were not serving God then. Lord make me thy servant, though it be the least in all thy kingdom!" was his express language, and an expression that at the time very much affected me.

He often burst out into loud praises, and once in the following words: "Glory be to God in the highest. Hallelujah! Amen!" Looking up in my face he asked me if I could not give him a passport to Heaven. I told him that only God through the Lord Jesus could give him that, which was the witness of His Spirit, and the earnest of his inheritance above. He added, "You are the door." I told him that Christ was the door, and none else. But said he, "You are the pastoral door."

He several times observed that those around him might think all was the effect of frenzy, that we might call him a fanatic, or an enthusiast: but for his part he was for experimental religion, the very quintessence of it. He several times stopped short as if he thought we would suppose he took too much on himself, and would say he did not pretend to be a preacher.

He stretched out his arms and hands, saying that he was dying in perfect love and peace with all men; and had not an enemy upon earth. Above all, I must not omit what I think was enough to have confounded any unbeliever, and what several must have heard, and observed as well as

myself, for with a particular emphasis, and the greatest exertion of his remaining strength he cried out: "Christ is the Son of God -- THE ONLY SON OF GOD." And after his speech was brought down to a whisper, and his senses I suppose must have been very imperfect; I heard him distinctly though feebly utter: "Christ, God -- Christ GOD."

And now, my good sir, lest you or anyone else that may see this imperfect account, should be tempted to think that it was my continually tormenting him with my prayers, or my preaching to him in his bewildered state -- hell and damnation, as some may please to phrase it; I confess I did neither, which perhaps, was my sin and shame, and what I cannot accuse myself with for upwards of twenty years, with any that have desired my attendance on them in their last hours. I never proposed praying with Mr. Hipkins, and though several times we had a few words on his eternal concerns, yet they were but few, and those not so pointed as usual at such times, so that he expressed both his surprise and sorrow to Mrs. Hipkins, as she has since informed me, that I did not pray and talk to him.

This conduct arose from several considerations. First:-- Although I knew Mr. Hipkins respected me, yet I did not think he loved prayer as well as he ought. Secondly:-- I waited for him to propose my praying with him, thinking it would do him the more good, when he stooped to crave it. Thirdly:-- The peculiarity of his complaint, with his being almost continually taken up one way or other when not asleep. Fourthly:-- An unwillingness to displease some of his friends present, who I expected would not think well of it. But also, what poor excuses are these and a thousand more such, when we see an immortal spirit on the very margin of the grave, and no interest in Christ: then, if ever, we should speak and spare not.

The more we see of God, and the less of man in any work of grace, the more we are convinced and led to give the glory unto God. For my part I know not how to account for so great and sudden a change, but by saying in the scripture language:-- "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

A man who never was known to pray before, by his most intimate friends, now prayed, as if he had been a praying man all his life, and with as much fervor, and vehemence of soul as if the salvation of the whole world depended upon his obtaining his request. A man who never discoursed upon the evil of sin in its nature and consequences, in public, (if at all) and to hear him in the midst of his acquaintances, many of whom (as well as himself heretofore) were strangers to such conversation; yet now spoke as one taught in those doctrines for years. To see him standing as on the borders of eternity while many of his expressions were so sublime, and that at a time we were expecting little else but raving madness, or perhaps blasphemy; surely we must say, salvation belongeth unto the Lord. This may remind us of the servant who stood idle until the eleventh hour, yet then entered and received wages equal with those who had borne the burden and heat of the day. And this may remind us of the penitent thief on the cross, to whom our blessed Saviour said, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Who can doubt but in this respect, as in a thousand others, one day with the Lord is as a thousand years. He speaks the word, and the work is done. But let not instances of this sort encourage any to put off their day of salvation, for none can tell whether they who slight the present

offer, shall ever have another. "Behold, now is the acceptable time -- Behold now is the day of salvation."

The display of God's mercy and power toward Mr. Hipkins, ought to be an encouragement to all pious persons when they can do nothing more, or when every other means fail, still to persevere in earnest prayer to God. The Holy Ghost informs us by the apostle, that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much with God. I have made it my business to inquire into the exercises of my religious friends, both those who were present, and those round in the neighborhood, and have found that they all expressed one language, viz. -- that they felt their hearts very uncommonly drawn out in prayer, and the most of them had a comfortable hope that God would save his soul, though as the apostle says, "so as by fire," that is, humanly speaking, with the greatest difficulty. Although you see from what I have here written down, that my hopes are up, in Mr. Hipkin's dying a penitent; yet I do not pretend to be a judge in his case. It may be possible that all might have been the effects of his complaint, as I never saw any one under the same affliction.

Wishing you, and all of us, to make a proper improvement of this most afflicting providence.

I remain, &c.

[Does not the reader agree? that there was a quite convincing "ring of reality" in Mr. Hipkins praises and exhortations, enough so that it seems most likely that he was saved, as a brand plucked out of the burning? -- DVM]

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PART SIXTH -- 1801 -- 1806

An Account of my Labors in the stations of Alexandria, Georgetown, and Washington City, from one thousand eight hundred and one, to my location the second time in one thousand eight hundred and six. -- The Conclusion.

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55 -- MAY 1, 1801 -- CONFERENCE AT PIPE CREEK, STATIONED AT ALEXANDRIA

I once more attended conference the first of May, one thousand eight hundred and one, at Pipe Creek, in Frederick county, Maryland, where I was appointed for Alexandria, twelve miles from home. I had no doubt but what the friends there would be indulgent enough to receive me with cheerfulness, if I could reside among them. But that they would be content with my going down once or twice a week, was, I thought, very doubtful, and still much more doubtful, that such partial services would answer any good end, since they had for many years been accustomed to their preacher being constantly with them. I took charge of the society with fear and trembling. I made it a point before I went, and while I remained among them, to seek the divine blessing upon my faint attempts.

I found that some of the females were not so united as members of the same body ought to be, and that this had been the case for some time back. Our meetings in a few weeks became more lively, and there were several very hopeful symptoms both in the society and in the congregation of a revival, which, by the commencement of the second quarter, began and continued gradually through the rest of the year.

I never preached to any people with more freedom and comfort in any part of my life. I never felt more gratitude to God for any station, and could with confidence say, that if it had not been blessed to anyone else, it had to me.

The happiness that I enjoyed among my Alexandria friends, much more than compensated for all the pains I had taken in serving them. Several of them wished me to continue with them the ensuing year in the same way, and would have petitioned conference; but to that I would not consent, for I had a strong conviction on my mind that I must spend the following year in Georgetown.

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56 -- MAY 1, 1802 -- CONFERENCE AT BALTIMORE, STATIONED AT GEORGETOWN

The first of May, one thousand eight hundred and two, our conference began in Baltimore, and according to my expectation I was stationed in Georgetown the ensuing year. I found the society small, and in a very unpromising state; but the congregation was large and respectable. Some of my kind friends feared, that I should not find myself as comfortably situated as might be wished; but never did I meet with kinder friends, so that we only wanted more grace to make us truly happy together, and a blessing to all around us.

It was observed to me by several of the friends, that there had not been more than two or three white persons converted in Georgetown for a number of years. Most of the present members had come there from other parts. I believed and hoped that the time had come to favor the people of this place, and it was not long before most of the friends had their expectations raised.

In the course of the year, several embraced religion and joined the society. The friends got more engaged and sweetly strove together for the hope of the gospel. The congregation continued larger and much more attentive and tender under the word. Many appeared under serious and divine impressions, so that the prospect as it respected another year was both pleasing and encouraging.

I felt deeply sensible of being under infinite obligations to the God of all mercies, that I had not been disappointed in my expectations, and felt a hope that the revival with which we had been blessed, was only as a drop before a shower, and though I had no wish to continue another year, yet did I feel anxious that they should be supplied with a preacher who would be calculated to improve the present season. This was a year of great peace and consideration to me. I enjoyed good health and great enlargement of heart for the ingathering of souls to the Lord's Kingdom, with considerable life and liberty in all the ordinances of his house, but in none more than in dispensing the words of eternal life. It was to me more than the increase of corn, wine, or oil. I often enjoyed

through the silent hours of the Sabbath nights after laboring all the day and part of the night, such a sacred sense of the divine presence and nearness to the throne of grace by the precious blood of the covenant, that all sleep has been banished from my eyes, while I have felt,

"That solemn awe that dares not move,
And all that silent heaven of love."

I have considered the two last years among the happiest years of my pilgrimage, and hope the Lord hath greater blessings in store for me, though I am unworthy of the least.

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57 -- JANUARY, 1803

January one thousand eight hundred and three. The Lord removed from her prison of clay, my mother, who had lived in this world of sorrow upwards of ninety years. She lived till life became burdensome to her, through the infirmities of old age. Till near her last, she could walk across her room, and retained her internal faculties, better than could be expected. I felt thankful when I heard of her release. How is an age even of ninety* years like a tale told, when it comes to a close. [*William Watters himself died at a somewhat advanced age. He was born in 1751 and died in 1833, his life spanning about 82 years. -- DVM]

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58 -- MAY 1, 1803 -- CONF. AT BALTIMORE, APPOINTED AGAIN TO ALEXANDRIA

The first of May one thousand eight hundred and three, I attended conference in Baltimore, and was, with one more, appointed for Alexandria, where there had been the year past and still continued, a very considerable revival of religion. Many were certainly reformed and converted to the Lord; but many made a great noise and ado that knew too little of what they were about. From the greatness of the work -- the spirit of the times as well as from several other causes that then existed, which I do not think proper to mention, I never found more difficulty in separating the chaff from the wheat, without endangering the real work. There were many in the course of twelve months added unto the Church, numbers of whom continue to adorn their profession, yet the spirit and genius of the revival was not so congenial to my feelings as had been the much less revival with which we had been blessed two years before. But I am sensible, and wish to be more so, that there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. It belongeth not unto me to dictate, but to follow the leadings of a kind providence, and that word of inspiration that gives us infallible instructions in all such matters -- so that however things may turn up from the enemy, from sinners, or the injudicious among us, all will end well if we do but with patience and perseverance, pursue the work given us to do.

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59 -- APRIL 27, 1804 -- CONF. IN ALEXANDRIA, RE-APPOINTED TO ALEXANDRIA

The twenty-seventh of April, one thousand eight hundred and four, our conference began in Alexandria, and continued to sit five days. It was a profitable time and we were blessed with great harmony and brotherly affection. I continued by the request of the friends in Alexandria, but I really had my doubts whether it would be for the better, yet I consented to take my appointment. It was a sifting year which I looked for, that required not only great strictness mixed with greater tenderness, but more of my presence and attendance than I could well give, at the distance I lived from them. There were several discouraging and disagreeable circumstances in the course of the year, yet I found greater freedom and power in my public speaking than I had experienced in any of the three years that I had been among them. I was glad at the expiration of the year to commit them to God and the word of his grace in the confidence that they would be better provided for.

* * *

60 -- APRIL 1, 1805 -- CONF. IN WINCHESTER, APPOINTED TO WASHINGTON CITY

With considerable difficulty I attended conference in Winchester, the first of April, one thousand eight hundred and five, and was appointed for Washington City; but after the first quarter, changed every other Sabbath with the preacher in Georgetown. It was to me a comfortable year.

The friends in both places were loving and kind, and we often sat together in heavenly places. I did not meet with one jar, or any considerable uneasiness among them through the year, and in the City we had a small addition to the church, and a considerable increase in the congregation, and there were no small hopes that the way was prepared of the Lord for much good to be done the ensuing year. I hoped that the preachers appointed there, would have the happiness of seeing and rejoicing in it.

I shall further observe, that as a Christian and a member of the Methodist Church, when I first cast in my lot among them, I had no doubt of their being the people of God, and that for Christian experience, and holy, humble walking in all simplicity before God and man, I know of no denomination to be compared to them. This is precisely my opinion still, however, I may and do think well of many individuals among other denominations.

As a minister among the Methodists, I never joined them for the loaves and fishes; but purely because I confidently believed that God had not only called me to preach, but to preach among 'them' the unsearchable riches of his grace. I have still the same conviction alive on my mind, that there is no other people with whom I could be so happy, nor with whom I could do as much good.

As to the doctrines held and espoused by the Methodists, I have not only embraced them all, but to the present day continue established in them. Yet I feel the greatest cheerfulness in wishing every man the liberty of thinking for himself, as every one must give an account to God for himself in the day of the Lord Jesus.

As to the discipline of the Methodist Church, though I have no doubt but it has its defects, yet I do think that it is by far the most scriptural and the most primitive of any I have ever seen, and the best calculated to spread the genuine gospel, and to keep up the life and power of godliness in

the Church of Christ. When at any time I have not been as well satisfied with any particular part of our economy, as I could wish to be, yet I never felt a thought of separating from my brethren on account thereof, but have waited, and made use of those means I thought most prudent to have such parts corrected, and it gives me particular pleasure to say, that in every such instance, I have seen the correction take place for which I have wished.

I have thought that son unworthy who acts unbecoming in his relation to his mother, who turns his back on her and perhaps speaks all the unkindness that his unnatural heart can devise, because some of his brethren of the same parent, in some things think differently from him, or because others of them have not treated him with that affection which at all times they should have done.

I think Christian affection and forbearance at all times, and on all occasions should be shown those who may differ with us on some points of theology. I have never found an obstacle in my way in readily believing well of, and heartily wishing the best for, all of every denomination, who have evidenced their faith by a pious life,* however differently they have thought from me. Why should not anyone do the same? when so many holy and wise men in almost all ages of the Church have differed so widely in the less essential parts of their religious sentiments. However well established and assured anyone may be in his orthodoxy, yet must the best and wisest of men know that they see but darkly, as through a veil. There are more truths, and of much more importance, in which we perfectly agree, than those smaller points in which we differ.

[*It might be well to note here that Watters "ecumenical" views were expressed at a time when there was much more real spiritual life and piety in "non-holiness" churches than there is today. Also, readers should keep in mind that Watters' acceptance of the testimony of others outside of the Methodist Church, the holiness church of that day, was based upon the evidence of a "pious life," and not merely their voiced profession. -- DVM]

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THE CONCLUSION

To Conclude:-- If this short account of my life should in any measure contribute to the conviction and conversion of any, or to the encouragement of the children of God, in their way to the Kingdom, I shall but little regard the reflections of any on account of the weak and imperfect manner in which I have expressed myself.

I am now in the fifty-fifth year of my age, and the thirty-sixth since I set out for the Kingdom of Heaven, blessed at present with good health, and enjoying all things necessary for life and godliness; and though I have been, and still am, a most unworthy and unprofitable servant, yet hath the merciful God of all grace crowned and crowded my life with his loving kindness in ten thousand instances unto the present day, for which I desire to praise him in time and eternity. I do most devoutly pray, that if these few pages have been written with a pure intention, and in a right spirit, and contain matter agreeable to his word and will, that God in his infinite mercy may make them a blessing, when I am no more numbered among the living, and that He may mercifully

continue his unmerited blessings to me, my few remaining days, and give me in the end to die the death of the righteous, and let my last end to be like his. Even so Lord Jesus. -- Amen.

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WILLIAM WATTERS DIED TRIUMPHANTLY IN 1833

Those interested in learning more about William Watters are encouraged to read the compilation following the next paragraph. For those who may not have time to do so, the following is a portion of that compilation that tells somewhat of the triumphant end of this dear man of God:

"Boehm, the traveling companion of Asbury, says that in February, 1811, while in Virginia, they "rode to William Watters." ... Bishop Asbury and he [William Watters] were lifetime friends. The bishop was acquainted with him before he was licensed to preach. When these aged men met on this occasion they embraced and saluted each other with 'a holy kiss;' and the bishop, writing of this visit in his journal, speaks of him as 'my dear old friend, William Watters.' He was distinguished for humility, simplicity, and purity. Few holier ministers has the Methodist Church ever had than William Watters. I rejoice that I was permitted to hear him preach, and to be his guest; to eat at his table, to sit at his fireside, to enjoy his friendship and hospitality. His house was for years a regular preaching-place on the circuit. In 1833, at the age of eighty-two, he died in holy triumph. His name will go down to the end of time, bearing the honored title of 'The First American Traveling Preacher.'"

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WILLIAM WATTERS The First American Circuit Rider

Compiled, edited, and arranged By Duane V. Maxey
From: "History of the M. E. Church" by Abel Stevens
"A History of the M. E. Church" by Nathan Bangs
"Cyclopedia of Methodism" by Matthew Simpson

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A -- FROM THE CYCLOPEDIA OF METHODISM BY MATTHEW SIMPSON

William Watters was the first American to join the ranks of Methodist itinerant preachers. After his conversion, one of Wesley's sermons, published by Robert Williams, led him into a still deeper spiritual experience, and he became a strong advocate, by his life as well as his exhortations, of entire sanctification. There is but a brief account of this Methodist pioneer in the

1882 edition of the Cyclopedia of Methodism, but it presents some of the dated milestones of his life and ministry:

At the first Annual Conference of American Methodism in 1773, William Watters became the first native American to receive an itinerant appointment. He was born Oct. 16, 1751, in Baltimore Co., Md. He heard the early Methodists preach when about nineteen years of age, and was converted in his twentieth year. He commenced his ministerial work by assisting the Rev. Robert Williams, at Norfolk, and was received into the Conference on trial in 1773. In 1782, on account of pressing pecuniary matters he obtained a location. He returned to the Conference in 1786; was afterwards located again, but re-entered the Conference in 1801, and continued to labor until 1805, when his health became too feeble for the ministerial work. He died in 1833, and was buried at Falls Church, Va. He was diligent, deeply pious, and very useful."

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B -- THE WATTERS COMPILATION FROM STEVENS AND BANGS

I have compiled and arranged the following material on William Watters from the histories of both Abel Stevens and Nathan Bangs. I have purposely refrained from enclosing the Watters material from these authors in quotation marks, and I have amalgamated the selections from both into a chronological whole. Lastly, I have written in a few words in several places to facilitate the smooth flow of the conjoined materials, and I have also inserted the subheadings. This united and edited Stevens-Bangs account of William Watters immediately follows:

* * * * *

THE FIRST APPEARANCE WATTERS' NAME ON THE ITINERANT LIST

William Watters' name appears in the list of appointments made at the first American conference in 1773, and to him is now universally conceded the peculiar distinction of being the first native American itinerant of Methodism; an honor never to be shared, never impaired. He has left us an unpretentious "Short Account" of his "Christian experience and ministerial labors." [A Short Account of the Christian Experience and Ministerial Labors Of William Watters. Drawn up by himself. Alexandria. Printed by S. Snowden. The imprint has no date, but the preface is dated Fairfax, May 14, 1806.]

* * * * *

HIS BIRTH IN 1751 AND EARLY LIFE

He was born in Baltimore county, Maryland on the 10th of October, 1751. His parents were strict members of the English Church, and from his infancy he was addicted to religious reflections. "At a very early period," he writes, "I well remember to have been under serious impressions at various times, but when about twelve or fourteen years old he took, he says, "great delight in dancing, card-playing, horse-racing, and such pernicious practices, though often terrified with thoughts of eternity in the midst of them. Thus did my precious time roll away while I was

held in the chains of my sins, too often a willing captive of the devil. I had no one to tell me the evil of sin, or to teach me the way of life and salvation. The two ministers in the two parishes, with whom I was acquainted, were both immoral men, and had no gifts for the ministry; if they received their salary they appeared to think but little about the souls of the people. The blind were evidently leading the blind, and it was by the mere mercy of God that we did not all fall into hell altogether."

When sixteen or seventeen years of age he was considered by his associates "a very good Christian," but he thought of himself quite otherwise. "It was," he says, "my constant practice to attend the church with my prayer book, and to often read my Bible and other good books, and sometimes I attempted to say my prayers in private. Many times, when I have been sinning against God, I have felt much inward uneasiness, and often, on reflection, a hell within, till I could invent something to divert my mind from such reflections. Hence, strange as it may appear, I have left the dancing-room to pray to God that he might not be offended with me, and have then returned to it again with as much delight as ever."

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FIRST CONTACT WITH THE METHODISTS

Strawbridge, King, and Williams were abroad around him, preaching in private houses, and in 1770 he had frequent opportunities of hearing them. "I could not conceive," he writes, "what they meant by saying we must be born again, and, though I thought but little of all I heard, for some time, yet I dared not despise and revile them, as many then did. By frequently being in company with several of my old acquaintances, who had professed Methodism, among whom was my oldest brother and his wife, (who I thought equal to any religious people in the world,) and hearing them all declare, as with one voice, that they knew nothing of heart-religion, the religion of the Bible, till since they had heard the Methodists preach, I was utterly confounded; and I could not but say with Nicodemus, 'How can these things be?' While I was marveling at the unheard-of things that these strange people were spreading wherever they came, and before I was aware, I found my heart inclined to forsake many of my vain practices, and at the last place of merriment I ever attended, I remember well I was hardly even a looker-on. So vain did all their mirth appear to me, as did also their dancing, which I was formerly so fond of, that now no arguments could prevail on me to be seen on the floor. I had my reflections, though I was on the devil's ground; and, among others, while I was looking at a young man of property, who was beastly drunk and scarcely able to sit in his chair, a dog passed by, and I deliberately thought I would rather be that dog than a drunkard. Some, even of my friends, began to fear that I should become a Methodist; but I had no such thought, and yet I often found my poor heart drawn to them, as a people that lived in a manner I never had known any to live before."

* * * * *

HIS CONVERSION

By the religious care of his early education and the natural tenderness of his conscience, it was impossible that he could long resist the Methodist influences which now met him on every

side. "I seldom, if ever," he adds, "omitted bowing my sinful knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, four or five times a day. It was daily my prayer that God would teach the way of life and salvation, and not suffer me to be deceived. After being uncommonly uneasy for several days concerning the state of my soul, I went with my eldest brother and family to a prayer-meeting in his neighborhood on a Sabbath day; and while one was at prayer I saw a man near me, whom I knew to be a poor sinner, trembling, weeping, and praying, as though His all depended on the present moment; his soul and body were in an agony. The gracious Lord, who works by what means he pleases, blessed this circumstance greatly to my conviction; so that I felt, in a manner which I have not words fully to express, that I must be internally changed, that I must be born of the Spirit, or never see the face of God. Without this, I was deeply sensible that all I had done or could do was vain. I went home much distressed, and fully determined, by the grace of God, to seek the salvation of my soul with my whole heart. In this frame of mind, I soon got by myself and full upon my knees. But, alas! my sinful heart felt as a rock, and though I believed myself in the 'gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity,' and, of course, that if I died in that state I must die eternally, yet I could not shed one tear, neither could I find words to express my wretchedness before my merciful high Priest; I could only bemoan my forlorn state, and I wandered about through the afternoon in solitary places, seeking rest but finding none."

That night, however, in another prayer-meeting, both his heart and eyes melted. "I was so melted down and blessed with such a praying heart, that I should have been glad if they would have continued on their knees all night in prayer for me, a poor, helpless wretch."

The next day he was unfit for any business: he spent it in retirement. "I refused to be comforted but by the Friend of sinners. My cry was, day and night, Save, Lord, or I perish; give me Christ, or else I die. In this state I loved nothing better than weeping, mourning, and prayer, humbly hoping, waiting, and longing for the coming of the Lord. For three days and nights eating, drinking, and sleeping in a measure fled from me while my flesh wasted away and my strength failed in such a manner that I found it was not without cause that it is asked, 'A wounded spirit who can heal?' Having returned in the afternoon from the woods to my chamber, my eldest brother (at whose house I was) knowing my distress, entered my room with all the sympathy of a brother and a Christian. To my great astonishment he informed me that God had that day blessed him with his pardoning love. After giving me all the advice in his power, he kneeled down with me, and with a low, soft voice (which was frequently interrupted by tears) he offered up a fervent prayer to God for my present salvation." He received "a gleam of hope," but was not content with it. The next day several "praying persons," who knew his distress, visited him. He requested them to pray with him, and the family was called in, though it was about the middle of the day. "While they all joined in singing, my face," he says, "was turned to the wall, with my eyes lifted upward in a flood of tears and I felt a lively hope that the Lord whom I sought would suddenly come to his temple. My good friends sung with the spirit and in faith. The Lord heard and appeared spiritually in the midst of us A divine light beamed through my inmost soul and in few minutes encircled me around, surpassing the brightness of the noonday sun. Of this divine glory, with the holy glow that I felt within my soul, I have still as distinct an idea as that I ever saw the light of the natural sun, but know not how fully to express myself so as to be understood by those who are in a state of nature, inexperienced in the things of God; for 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.' My burden was gone, my sorrow fled, all that was within me rejoiced in hope of the glory God;

while I beheld such fullness and willingness in the Lord Jesus to save lost sinners, and my soul so rested in him, that I could now, for the first time, call Jesus Christ 'Lord, by the Holy Ghost given unto me.' The hymn being concluded, we all fell upon our knees, but my prayers were all turned into praises."

Such was the spiritual birth of the first regular Methodist preacher of the new world. This "memorable change," he says, took place in May, 1771, in the twentieth year of his age. In the same house where he was born "a child of wrath," he was also "born a child of grace." He immediately joined a Methodist class. All Methodists were, in those days, laborers in the evangelical vineyard. On the Lord's day, he says, they commonly divided into little bands and went out into different neighborhoods, wherever there was a door open to receive them, two, three, or four in company, and would sing their hymns, pray, read, talk to the people, "and some soon began to add a word of exhortation." "We were weak, but we lived in a dark day, and the Lord greatly owned our labors; for though we were not full of wisdom, we were blessed with a good degree of faith and power. The little flock was of one mind, and the Lord spread the leaven of his grace from heart to heart, from house to house, and from one neighborhood to another. It was astonishing to see how rapidly the work extended all around us, bearing down opposition as chaff before the wind. Many will praise God forever for our prayer meetings. In many neighborhoods they soon became respectable and were considerably attended. Two of his brothers were converted through his instrumentality, one of them became a zealous Local Preacher, and later, a Traveling Preacher.

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HIS ENTRY INTO THE ITINERANCY -- 1772-3

In 1772, when he was twenty-one years old, he began to preach. Robert Williams perceived his capacity for usefulness, and took him, in the autumn, to Norfolk, Va. Thus was William Watters ushered into the ministry, and has ever since been honored as the first native American itinerant.

The scene of his departure for an itinerant life was deeply affecting. His mother, whom he loved tenderly, offered him all her possessions if he would abandon his purpose. Many of his friends "wept and hung around" him; "but," he adds, "I found such resignation and so clear a conviction that my way was of the Lord, that I was enabled to commit them and myself to the care of our heavenly Father, in humble confidence, that if we never met again in this vale of tears, we should soon meet where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Calling at one of my brothers on my way to take my leave of them at parting my fortitude seemed all banished, and I was so exceedingly affected that it was with the greatest difficulty I could find any utterance to commit them in prayer to the Divine protection. O for a continual preparation to meet where all tears shall be wiped away. Even so Lord Jesus. Amen." And now he began in earnest his itinerant career. The two evangelists journeyed and preached, almost daily, through Baltimore, Georgetown, and other places, and arrived at last in Norfolk, where, under many discouragements, Watters soon formed a circuit, extending some distance among the neighboring towns. He was seized with the measles, but continued his labors. To my inexpressible consolation," he says, "several, both in town and country, were brought to know the Lord, which gave a fresh spring to

my humble endeavors. I felt liberty and power to speak the words of eternal life, and often resolved to be more faithful in the important work, and to labor while it was called today."

Pilmoor had been preaching in Norfolk; he was now released by Watters to pursue his southern tour to Charleston. Williams also left the young itinerant and hastened to Portsmouth and further. Jarratt and McRoberts, "two English clergymen," received him with open arms, and welcomed him to their parishes. Jarratt became a staunch friend to the Methodist itinerants and the confidential friend of Asbury. [Later] In the absence of Williams, on His visit to Jarratt, Watters was prostrated with nervous fever, and for some time he seemed suspended between life and death. It tested and proved his faith. Coming forth from the attack he exclaims, "O what inexpressible desires did I feel to devote the remnant of my days to the honor of God, who had done great things for such a poor worm!" He returned to his home after an absence of eleven months, in which he had been thoroughly initiated into the hardships and triumphs of the itinerancy. He met Asbury for the first time, and journeyed on horseback with him some miles; Rankin also came across his path, and he saw in these apostolic men the highest models of ministerial character.

At the Conference of 1773, which he did not attend, he was appointed, as we have seen, with John King, to New Jersey; but neither of them traveled that long circuit; another native preacher was to take his place there. Watters' sickness had detained him away, and Rankin altered his appointment to Kent, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The young itinerant again took affecting leave of his home, and rode forth on his evangelical adventures:

"On my way," he says, "I felt a humiliating sense of my littleness of faith, and my unprofitableness in the Lord's vineyard; and, from my inmost soul, promised from that I would set out afresh both to live and preach the gospel, and, through infinite mercy, I felt a divine evidence that he would be with me and bring me to the people to whom I was going in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of peace. In this circuit, which was a two weeks' one, and the only one then between the two bays, I continued four or five months with greater freedom and success in preaching than ever before. Many, in different places, attended our meetings, and I had one invitation after another into new neighborhoods. Though I had but a few places, when I first went into the circuit, in a short time I was not able to go through them all in two weeks, and before I left it the circuit might have been readily enlarged to four weeks. Many were awakened and soundly converted, and we had as powerful times, for the number of people, as I have generally seen. I was much blest in my own soul, and confirmed in my call to the work of the ministry. Day and night the salvation of the people was uppermost in my mind. Our little number was daily increased, and great were our rejoicings in the Lord our righteousness. The prospect was such, and our attachment to each other so great, that it was with some reluctance I returned home in the forepart of the spring following."

The Eastern Shore was thenceforth to be a "fruitful garden of Methodism." At the next Conference "Kent" was reported in the Minutes as a circuit, the first formed on the Peninsula, and in the same year its first church, Kent Meeting-house," was erected. The chapel rose amid hostility; the timbers prepared for it were carried away at night and burned; but the society persisted, and at last entered, with prayer and praise, their humble temple. It has since been known as "Hinson's Chapel." "At this chapel," says an authority familiar with the locality, "rests the dust of John Smith,

the first itinerant that came into the work from Kent county, Md. Here, also, sleep the remains of the Christian philosopher, William Gill, who with his fingers closed his own eyes as he was sinking into the long sleep of the grave; and were it said that he, while yet able, preached his own funeral sermon, we should receive it as characteristic of this man, who was so fully freed from the fear of death. It would seem at the first society in Kent was formed in the beginning of 1773, and that it was in the neighborhood of the present Hinson's Chapel; nor does it appear that there was more than one society at this time in the county."

On retiring from the Eastern Shore, Watters labored, till the next Conference, in Baltimore and its vicinity. His success was not remarkable there, but he passed through inward experiences which tended to fit him for his future career. "I did not," he says, "find that life, power, and liberty in my ministrations as among the people I had left on the other shore. I frequently found, to my great grief, that my religion was too superficial, and that though sin did not reign in me, yet it remained and marred my happiness. I often mourned, wept, fasted, prayed, and truly longed to be sanctified throughout soul, body, and spirit, that I might be able to serve the Lord without interruption." He was still seeking for that "deep recollection and constant communion with the Lord which nothing for a moment should interrupt."

Such was William Watters, the first of the thousands, the tens of thousands, of American Methodist itinerants who have spread the gospel over the North American continent, a man fervent in spirit, prudent in counsel, indefatigable in labor, saintly in piety.

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HIS ADMISSION INTO FULL CONNECTION IN 1774

Young Watters attended the Conference of 1774, the first that he witnessed; and small as it was, it was an imposing spectacle to him. He was "much edified by the conversation of his elder brethren," and preached before them, and a large congregation, in St. George's, with an awe which amounted to embarrassment.

At this Conference of 1774 William Watters was admitted into full connection. Bangs writes: "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 Dromgoole, 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 the ecclesiastical year Watters was abroad in New Jersey. "The latter part of the winter," he says, "and through the spring, many in the upper end of the circuit were greatly wrought on, and our meetings were lively and powerful. The cries of the people, for mercy, were frequently loud and earnest. Several who had long rested in a form of godliness were brought under pressing concern and found the Lord, and many of the most serious were greatly quickened. I was often much blessed in my own soul, and my hands lifted up, which were too apt to hang down. O how sweet to labor where the Lord gives his blessing, and 'sets open a door which no man can shut!' "

Still, the ominous threat of the Revolutionary War was on his mind: "The dreadful cloud," writes Watters, "that had been hanging over us continued to gather, thicker and thicker, so that I was often bowed down before the God of the whole earth."

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HIS LABORS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Young Watters was abroad, abundant in labors and patient in trials, during this troubled period. He went from the Philadelphia Conference of 1775 to the Frederick Circuit, Md. It extended over a region which might still be called the frontier. The roads were difficult, the settlements very scattered, the habitations mostly log-cabins, without conveniences for the sojourner. Watters went to proclaim his message through this wilderness, desponding often on his route, but he was refreshed at last by unexpected success. About midsummer a spiritual awakening appeared in almost every appointment of his circuit. He records that it was affecting to see how the people turned out, by day and by night, from their secluded homes with "earnest looks and many tears," inquiring "about the things of the kingdom." Every week he was cheered with conversions -- several often at a single meeting. His own earnest spirit was kindled with the extending interest, and reconciled to all the labors and privations of his hard field. "I often preached, prayed, and exhorted," he says, "till I was so exhausted that I was scarcely able to stand. This flame not only spread among sinners, but among professors of religion also, and even reached my poor heart, so that I could not but bless and praise God's holy name that though I was deprived of many conveniences, yet he made all up unto me, and I was contented to sleep in cabins, to eat a dry morsel, and frequently to retire into the woods to read, to meditate, and pray. My Lord and Master had not on earth a place to lay his head, and shall not I be thankful for the meanest place? He was hated, spit upon, condemned, crucified; and shall such a worm as I look for anything better?"

The changes of preachers from circuit to circuit were still semi-annual. After six months unremitting labors, during which scores of converts were gathered into the Church, Watters departed for Fairfax Circuit, Va., where, notwithstanding the prevalent political and military agitations, his powerful ministrations bore down all before him over at least two thirds of his circuit, a flame of "revival kindling and spreading from appointment to appointment." "In less than a quarter," he writes, "we had the greatest revival I had ever seen in any place. If ever I was enabled to labor for the salvation of souls, it was now." There were some "very astonishing instances of the mighty power of God in the conversion of respectable persons;" among whom he mentions, as one of his trophies, Nelson Reed, destined to be a standard-bearer in the itinerant ministry. "So gloriously," he adds, "did the word of the Lord prevail, that though there was preaching but once in three weeks in the same place," he being the only preacher on the circuit, "yet in five or six months there were added to the society upward of one hundred souls. Though wars and rumors of wars were all around us, we were permitted to dwell in peace, while every man sat under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid."

The next year he brought from the Conference a fellow-laborer to this field, and enlarged it to a four-weeks' circuit. He extended his travels into Frederick and Berkeley Counties, breaking up new ground, and preaching with success where a Methodist itinerant had never been heard. "This tour," he says, "through different neighborhoods and among all sorts of people, was much blessed

to my soul. I had many powerful seasons, and labored day and night, while the people came from all quarters to hear the words of eternal life." He seldom preached in any place without "seals to his ministry." On Berkeley Circuit especially, "the work increased a every hand." He closed the year among the cabins of Frederick Circuit, praying and studying in the woods, preaching in the barns, and rejoicing with "a simple hearted, loving people," "happy in being of one heart and one mind -- with few disputes," and "few falling off -- the most growing in grace."

The next year he set off from the Conference, in company with several preachers, for the noted Brunswick Circuit in Southern Virginia. His companions on the route were destined to different and difficult fields between the James and Roanoke Rivers. They rode forth with the consciousness of the responsibility and the sure success of apostles. "Their conversation was," he writes, "such as became the gospel, edifying and strengthening, while most of us were entire strangers to all we met. We all appeared to breathe the same spirit, and I verily believe our sole desire, in leaving our little all, was that we might be instrumental, in the hands of God, in bringing lost sinners into the fold of Christ." On the route he heard McRoberts, the friend of Jarratt, preach a genuinely evangelical sermon. "It was the first example," he says, of such a discourse heard by him from a clergyman of the Church of England. McRoberts, impatient of the secular, not to say profane spirit of his clerical associates, subsequently left the Church and became a Presbyterian pastor, but never lost his evangelical zeal and usefulness. Jarratt's home was on Watters' circuit, and the zealous rector received the itinerant as a brother, beloved not only in the faith, but in its apostleship, esteeming him worthy of more than ordinary honor for the humility and hardships of his labors. "Weak, and hardly able to sit on my horse," writes Watters, "I at last came to the house of Mr. Jarratt, with whom I stayed a night, as I did every time I came round my circuit. His barn, well fitted up with seats and a pulpit, was one of our preaching places, and I found him very friendly and attentive to me while I stayed in these parts." It required six weeks, with almost daily preaching, to pass round the circuit. There were already large societies in almost every neighborhood, the fruits of the ministrations of Jarratt, Williams, Asbury, and other laborers. Watters had two colleagues, but he says his "hands were full."

He expected greater success than he realized on this lively circuit, but he records, "The Lord evidently owned us, in every neighborhood, both in and out of our Societies. We labored to the utmost of our abilities in the cause of our glorious Master, and daily found his service perfect freedom." The military troubles of the times reached the evangelists even in this remote region. At a Quarterly Meeting at Mayberry's Chapel in the summer of 1777, attended by all the Circuit and many Local Preachers, as well as a large assembly of the people, they were interrupted by a magistrate as suspicious men from beyond the limits of the state. Watters, however, and one of his brethren, took the oath of allegiance, as proof of their loyalty, and the threatening storm passed away. "Our preaching," he says, "commenced immediately. The Lord was present and gave utterance, and the Word was as 'a hammer and fire, that break the rock in pieces.' The little seeming opposition roused the minds of some of our friends, and several appeared to possess a good degree of the spirit of martyrs. The God of Daniel was in our midst, and many, on both days of our meeting, shouted aloud the praises of our Immanuel. We parted filled with love, and more than ever determined to follow the Lord fully."

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HIS ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

He spent some time on the Pittsylvania Circuit, and the next year traveled with remarkable success that of Sussex. While passing the second time around this circuit his word had unusual power -- "the windows of heaven were opened, and the Lord poured out such a blessing as our hearts were not able to contain." Some of the rustic assemblies were overwhelmed with the truth. "We were so filled," he says on one occasion, "with the love of God, and overawed with his divine majesty, that we lay prostrate at his footstool, scarcely able to rise from our knees for a considerable time, while there were strong cries and tears from every part of the house for that perfect love which casteth out fear." Jarratt and the devoted Methodist itinerants had preached faithfully, in these parts of Virginia, Paul's doctrine of "perfection," John's doctrine of "perfect love;" and Watters records that he had never met before with so many living examples of it as in the societies of this circuit. He caught from them the same spirit. "O my God! when shall I awake with thy likeness, and be filled with thy fullness!" was his constant prayer.

A new epoch here occurred in his personal history. He had been remarkable for his devotion, the transparent purity and simplicity of his religious life, and the benignity of his temper; but he had seen, especially by the aid of Wesley's Writings, that there were "deep things of God" which he had not fathomed, and he consecrated himself to an absolute devotion. In a little circle of praying friends, "I was," he says, "in an agony of prayer, and my heart was ready to burst with longing after the blessing, expecting every moment to hear the kind release, 'go in peace, sin no more.' My cry was incessant. 'Father, glorify thy name, pour out thy Spirit.' " Then "followed a deep and awful sense of the divine presence, an inward calm, which words cannot express. I was in my own eyes less than the least of God's people, and knew that all was of grace." But he dare not yet "confidently conclude" that his "soul was renewed in love."

Subsequently he "found that it is by faith we stand in every state of grace," that sanctification, like justification, is by faith. Walking with a friend, they retired into a solitary place, and on their knees most "earnestly desired not to rise till every doubt were removed." There, in the calm solitude, he was "most graciously and powerfully blessed and filled with confidence and peace." Powerful as his earnest ministry had hitherto been, it now took a new tone; its energy, if more calm, was more effective. The "most glorious work" that ever he "had seen was on this circuit among believers. Scores professed to be sanctified to the Lord;" he "could not be satisfied without pressing upon Christians their privilege "in this respect, and he records that wherever "they were exhorted to go on to perfection the Word was blessed."

His next circuit was Fairfax, where, he says, the truth prevailed mightily, notwithstanding the war; he remarks, indeed, that this was generally the case throughout the country. "It is not more astonishing than true, that the work continued to spread in all those parts where we had preachers to labor, and I doubt whether, at any time before or since, it has been more genuine among us than during the war." This is an anomalous fact, but it has its explanation in that providential relation of the Methodistic movement to the national destiny which has already been discussed.

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HIS EFFORTS TO HELP RESOLVE THE SACRAMENTAL CONTROVERSY

About this time a controversy arose concerning whether the American Methodist preachers should, or should not, be allowed to administer the sacraments. Asbury resolutely held to Wesley's requirement that they not do so. Robert Strawbridge, and others who agreed with him maintained that they should do so. This sacramental controversy menaced the infant Church with perilous if not fatal results. Watters, as we shall hereafter see, had important connections with that disturbance; he trembled for its probable consequences. Being the first and most prominent native itinerant, his influence among the disputants was unequalled, and he became the chief conciliator between the opposing parties. "I finally," he says, "came to the determination to endeavor, by every means in my power, to prevent a division; or, if that could not be done, to stand in the gap as long as possible." He was successful, and thus averted a disaster which might, at this early period in the history of the denomination, have proved ruinous.

At the Conference held in Leesburg, 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."

At the next conference 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.

Those in Virginia who favored the administration of the sacraments by the Methodist clergymen themselves held a separate conference their in 1780. The regular conference, conducted by Asbury met on April 24, 1780 in Baltimore. This conference voted their disapproval of the

actions taken by the Virginia group, and a delegation including Asbury, Garrettson, and Watters, journeyed to the Virginia Conference in an effort once again to resolve the issue and heal the breach if possible. Nathan Bangs, in his Methodist history quotes from Asbury's account of this journey to Virginia:

"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' 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

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WATTERS' CONTINUED LABORS TO 1783

In 1778 and 1779 William Watters was on Baltimore Circuit. "I never," he writes, "traveled a circuit with more satisfaction." "There was a general movement and quickening among the members of the Societies. The ungodly, in many places, stood astonished, and could not but acknowledge that the arm of the Lord was revealed." Sanctification was now his almost habitual theme, and many were the witnesses of its power throughout his extensive field of labor. Years later he says: "Many, I am fully persuaded, to this day recollect those divine seasons with grateful hearts, and have ever since felt their happy effects."

Down to the end of 1783 William Watters continued to travel in Maryland and Virginia, with a zeal that knew no abatement and a success hardly excelled by any evangelist of the denomination -- often in new circuits in mountainous regions, his lodgings in log-cabins, his chapels barns, his health broken so much that, three or four times, his brethren expected to bury him, a martyr to his work. He was one of the few itinerants who had families.

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HIS LOCATION PRIOR TO THE M. E. CHURCH ORGANIZATION

In 1783 he was compelled to locate, but he still labored indefatigably, one of his regular appointments being at least forty miles distant from his home; another, thirty. "I have never," he wrote, "since I knew the Lord, seen anything in this world worth living for an hour, but to prepare, and assist others to prepare, for that glorious kingdom which shall be revealed at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Not only many, but most of the itinerants of those early times had, sooner or later, to locate, on account of their worn-out health or domestic embarrassments; but they continued to perform more laborious service in the ministry than most of their itinerant successors, and the early outspread of Methodism through the land is scarcely less attributable to their zeal than to that of the "regular" Preachers.

Hardly had Watters located when he was cheered by news of the arrival of Coke, with authority from Wesley to organize the Church. On December 25, 1784, sixty out of the eighty-three preachers then in the traveling connection, assembled in the city of Baltimore for the "Christmas Conference" at which the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. Commenting on this organization in his memoirs, Watters says, "We became, instead of a religious society, a separate Church. This gave great satisfaction through all the societies." The first native itinerant had served faithfully through most of the forming period of the young denomination: he now saw it take organic and permanent form.

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HIS RE-ENTRY INTO THE ITINERANCY AFTER AN 18-YEAR LOCATION

William Watters, the first native American Methodist preacher, reappears in the appointments for the year 1801, after having been located about eighteen years. During his location he preached habitually, and often at distances of many miles from his home. He was now fifty years old, mature in health and character, of extreme amiability, good sense, self-possession, and soundness of judgment. During most of our present period he labored at Alexandria, Georgetown,

and Washington. "I enjoyed," he writes, "good health and great enlargement of heart for the ingathering of souls to the Lord's kingdom, with considerable life and liberty in all the ordinances of his house, but in none more than in dispensing the words of eternal life. It was to me more than the increase of corn, wine, or oil. I often enjoyed through the silent hours of the Sabbath nights, after laboring all the day and part of the night, such a sacred sense of the divine presence and nearness to the throne of grace by the precious blood of the covenant, that all sleep has been banished from my eyes, while I have felt

'That solemn awe that dares not move,
And all the silent heaven of love.' "

He had been gradually gathering members into the societies of his appointments, when the great revival of these times swept over his field. "Many," he says, "were certainly reformed and converted to the Lord, but many made a great noise and ado that knew too little of what they were about, and from the greatness of the work, the spirit of the times, as well as from several other causes that then existed, which I do not think proper to mention, I never found more difficulty in separating the chaff from the wheat without endangering the real work. There were many in the course of twelve months added unto the Church, numbers of whom continue to adorn their profession, yet the spirit and genius of the revival was not so congenial to my feelings as the less revival with which we had been blessed two years before. But I am sensible, and wish to be more so, that there are diversities of operations, the same God which working all in all, and that it belongeth not unto me to dictate, but to follow the leadings of a kind Providence, and that word of inspiration that gives us infallible instructions in all such matters, so that however things may turn up from the enemy, from sinners, or the injudicious among us, all will end well if we do but with patience and perseverance pursue the work given us to do." These are characteristic remarks.

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HIS FINAL LOCATION IN 1806 AND DEATH IN 1833

He located again in 1806, and we get but few later glimpses of him. Boehm, the traveling companion of Asbury, says that in February, 1811, while in Virginia, they "rode to William Watters'. He retired from the regular work in 1806, but this heart was always in it. He was now living in dignified retirement on his farm on the Virginia side of the Potomac, opposite Georgetown. He was the first traveling preacher raised up in America. Philip Gatch commenced nearly the same time. They were intimate, and in their declining years corresponded with each other. Watters was a stout man, of medium height, of very venerable and solemn appearance. Bishop Asbury and he were lifetime friends. The bishop was acquainted with him before he was licensed to preach. When these aged men met on this occasion they embraced and saluted each other with 'a holy kiss;' and the bishop, writing of this visit in his journal, speaks of him as 'my dear old friend, William Watters.' He was distinguished for humility, simplicity, and purity. Few holier ministers has the Methodist Church ever had than William Watters. I rejoice that I was permitted to hear him preach, and to be his guest; to eat at his table, to sit at his fireside, to enjoy his friendship and hospitality. His house was for years a regular preaching-place on the circuit. In 1833, at the age of eighty-two, he died in holy triumph. His name will go down to the end of time, bearing the honored title of 'The First American Traveling Preacher.'"

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COMMENTS ABOUT WILLIAM WATTERS AND HIS FAMILY

"It is strange that so little is known of the latter years of so great and good a man. He was once of the most holy and useful men of the many who have adorned Methodism -- a Virginian Christian gentleman of the right type. His upright walk and sterling character were proverbial." -- Letter of D. Creamer to Abel Stevens

The biographer of his friend Gatch, who commenced preaching in the same year with him, but joined the itinerancy a little later, describes Watters in 1813 as a venerable looking man; his head white, his form erect, his countenance full of benevolence. For some time before his death he was totally blind.

One of our best Church antiquarians says: "The family to which Watters belonged was perhaps one of the most remarkable in the early annals of American Methodism. His mother died in her ninety-second year. There were seven brothers and two sisters. They were among the first of those whose hearts and houses were opened to receive the Methodist preachers when the latter came into Harford County, Md.; and several of the brothers, at an early period, became official members of the Methodist Societies. Stephen was a local preacher, Nicholas entered upon the itinerant work in 1786, and closed his useful life stationed in Charleston, S. C., in 1805. One of the earliest Methodist churches in Maryland was erected on the farm of Henry Watters, and was only removed a few years since in order to give place to a larger one. It was there that the famous Conference was held in 1777, when the English preachers, with the exception of Asbury, gave up the field, and returned to their native country. The old homestead is still in possession of the family; Henry Watters, Esq., the oldest son of his father, and Class Leader in the Church, is the proprietor. What imperishable memories cluster around the sweet rural mansion where Pilmoor and Boardman, Coke and Asbury, so often lodged and prayed! Verily, 'the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.'" [Dr. Hamilton, in Sprague, p. 49.]

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