

Freeborn Garrettson

By Ezra S. Tipple
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To The New York Conference
In Loving Memory Of Our Honored Dead
And With Affectionate And Fraternal Regard
For Its Living Members, Who So Worthily Represent
To This Generation The Spirit, Purpose, And Enterprise Of The Fathers

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PREFATORY NOTE

The sources to which I have gone for information concerning Freeborn Garrettson are: The Life of Garrettson, by Nathan Bangs, written by him at the request of the family; Garrettson's Journal, which was brought out in 1791 and contained an account of his experiences and travels up to June 28, 1790; his manuscript Journals, manuscript Notes on his Printed Journals, and an incomparable collection of Garrettson letters and papers in Drew Theological Seminary; the Semicentennial Sermon which he preached before the New York Conference in 1826; Asbury's Journal, Lee's Short History of the Methodist, and the various other histories of American Methodism, together with numerous other books relating directly or indirectly to the period of the Methodist Episcopal Church covered by his life.

The picture of Garrettson which appears in Bang's Life of Garrettson, and which has been reproduced many times since, is from a painting by Paradise and engraved by Durand. The picture in this volume is from a miniature portrait, painted by J. Thomson for Mrs. Garrettson, and which remained in the family until the death of Miss Garrettson, when it came into the possession of Drew Theological Seminary, where it now is. It has never before been reproduced, and is of peculiar interest inasmuch as it was a favorite picture with both Mrs. and Miss Garrettson.

CHAPTER I ESTIMATE

It is not my purpose to attempt to establish Freeborn Garrettson's place in Methodist history. That has already been done, and his place is forever secure. John Newton, speaking of Whitefield's eloquence, said: "If any man were to ask me who as a preacher was *second* of all I have ever heard I should be at some loss; but in regard to the *first*, Mr. Whitefield so far exceeded every man of his time that I should be at no loss." By common consent Francis Asbury is given the highest seat among the fathers of American Methodism. And while there may be some honest difference of opinion as to who should rank next to him in the first half century of our history, the consensus of opinion of Methodist historians would seem to accord that honorable distinction to Freeborn Garrettson. Dr. Bangs, in his History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, says that at the time of Garrettson's admission into the itinerant ranks in 1775 the number of preachers was only 19, and members in the societies 3,148, and at the time of his death in 1827 these had increased to 1,642 preachers, and church members 421,105, and adds, "and perhaps no individual preacher contributed more, if indeed as much, to promote this spread of the work than the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson"; and no man of his generation was better qualified by personal acquaintance with Garrettson, by wide observation and knowledge of men, and by superior intellectual attainments to give Garrettson's measure than Nathan Bangs. A recent writer in the Methodist Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, says: "I doubt whether Freeborn Garrettson has received his due recognition in our early history. The fact that he was a Marylander, a man of wealth with perhaps not a little of the old aristocratic air clinging to him, and that he had married into an old and wealthy family in New York, may have come in between him and his humbler brethren of the North, and the fact that he was an avowed antislavery man of the most intense type, and opposed to the rule of Asbury and McKendree, as it existed, may have had something to do with his want of popular favor in the South; but whatever the cause, I think the fact I have recognized is unquestionable, and yet the Church has produced few men whose influence for good has been greater and few men whose history has had in it more features of romantic interest."

While unquestionably there is some basis of fact in the opinion as thus expressed, Garrettson has not at any time since his death been in eclipse. Neither was he in his life. Who of his brethren could throw him into shadow? Not Jesse Lee, nor Ezekiel Cooper, nor John Dickins; not Benjamin Abbott, nor Thomas Ware, nor Caleb Pedicord; not Richard Whatcoat, nor William McKendree. There were men of that generation who were more celebrated preachers, and there were those who were better scholars, but, all in all, itinerant, missionary, preacher, statesman, in that first generation of Methodist itinerants, there was only one man who o'ertopped him, and that man was Francis Asbury. And whoever knows the position accorded by historians to this greatest ecclesiastic of American Christianity in the three or four decades following the Revolutionary War will appreciate that to be ranked next to him is no insignificant or meager distinction.

CHAPTER II IN THE MARYLAND WILDERNESS

“I was born in the year of our Lord 1752.” It is with this statement that Freeborn Garrettson begins the first part of his Journal, which he entitles, “A short account of my life till I was justified by faith.” The date was August 15; the place, the State of Maryland near the mouth of the Susquehanna River. His grandfather was an immigrant from Great Britain and among the first settlers on the west side of the Chesapeake Bay. His parents were communicants of the Church of England, and their children were brought up in the forms and usages of that Church. His father was a very moral man and was considered by his neighbors an eminent Christian. For him, as for his mother, Garrettson always had great affection. His mother was deeply religious, having come under the influence of the preaching of George Whitefield, who in his various itinerant journeys in America produced an impression which long continued. She had also heard Gilbert Tennent, an eminent Presbyterian minister, and one of the minister-sons of the distinguished William Tennent, who is regarded as one of the chief founders of Princeton University, and had been led by his preaching to religious contemplation and activity. Her son gave as his testimony in later years that although she lived in a “very dark day” she most certainly had “inward religion,” which seems to have been a rare experience before the Methodist itinerants invaded Maryland for the purpose of spreading scriptural holiness.

Garrettson’s biographer thinks that Garrettson’s parents entirely mistook the character of their child, believing him “prone to pride, self-will, and stubbornness,” but what they deemed pride proved only a noble, chivalrous spirit, ready at all times to frown on meanness and to defend the oppressed, and that what they thought self-will was only the love of freedom and independence, and that his stubbornness, when fully developed, became decision of character.

The boy was early taught the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Catechism, “and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul’s health,” in accordance with the parental vows made at his baptism. Garrettson was always religiously sensitive. He was strangely swayed all his life by his “feelings.” When he was but seven years of age he had an experience which “sensibly moved” him, although he did not comprehend in the least measure its spiritual import. On another occasion, some two years later, as he was walking alone through the fields it seemed to him that he heard a voice saying, “Ask, and it shall be given you,” and he was immediately drawn out in desire to know what it meant; and, he says, it was borne in upon his mind that this was a token for good, and he immediately became conscious of a new spirit of joy. The Holy Spirit was plainly at work in his heart, though if some one had asked him concerning the Holy Ghost, as Paul did certain disciples at Ephesus, he probably would have replied in the same terms they used, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” The state of religion in Maryland during Garrettson’s boyhood was at a low ebb, but as always, there were unseen spiritual forces, silent, mysterious, which were at work.

Shortly after the incident mentioned above he was again alone by himself, and once more a voice was heard. He knew not whence it came, whether from the whispering

trees or from the depths of his own heart, but it was as plain and real as if spoken by some friend face to face with him: "Do you know what a saint is?" It was all so real that he answered, "There are no saints on earth in this our day"; and the same strange voice replied, "A saint is one who is wholly given up to God"; and instantly he saw such a person "in idea," as Garrettson phrases it, the most beautiful that his eyes had ever beheld! The vision so affected him that he expressed aloud a desire to bear such a character, and to him there was given a "strong assurance" that such should be his experience, and again a spirit of joy flooded his heart.

His mother died when he was about ten years of age, but he never forgot the admonitions which she gave him. After her going away, a sorrow which was followed by other griefs, he became melancholy and frequently went alone to weep. A modern specialist would likely say that it was a case of disordered nerves! He knew that he wanted something but did not know what, and instead of purchasing a treatise on medicine bought a pocket Testament, which he read, often with bitter sighs and broken prayers.

When he was twelve years of age he went to school, where, he says, "I threw off all serious thoughts about another world and was as full of play and mischief as others of my age." Though Garrettson frequently condemns himself and brings numerous charges against himself, there is nothing to suggest that he was openly and flagrantly sinful, he himself saying, "I did not run into scandalous witness." He left school somewhere about 1770, and by that time there was a good deal of talk in Baltimore County and elsewhere concerning "the people called Methodists." The beginnings of American Methodism date from 1766, when Philip Embury began regular preaching in the city of New York. This is not the place to discuss the question whether the work of Strawbridge in Maryland antedates the work in New York. The best historians in America, such as Stevens, than whom no greater denominational historian has yet been raised up among us; Atkinson, whose researches concerning the beginnings of the Wesleyan movement in America are both invaluable and as yet incontrovertible; Wakeley, Buckley, Faulkner, and others unite in giving the preference to New York. The date of Strawbridge's first sermon in Maryland may never be known, since the year of his arrival in America has not been definitely determined (Crook, who made a careful study of all the Irish line of evidence, does not think that he left Ireland before 1766); but whatever the year he began, whether before or after Embury, this man who founded Methodism in Baltimore and Harford Counties in Maryland, restless by nature, and conscious of the needs of the new settlements which were unvisited by the lethargic clergy of the English Church, went in every direction preaching with glowing lips the sure word of the gospel. "Everywhere he went he raised up preachers," and whenever he preached sinners were converted. It was this flaming herald who was the first Methodist to be seen and heard by the young man in Maryland who had but recently returned from school and entered upon a life of carelessness and indifference. His picture of Strawbridge is doubtless the best one we have of that early preacher: "Mr. Strawbridge came to the house of a gentleman near where I lived to stay all night. I had never heard him preach, but as I had a great desire to be in company with a person who had caused so much talk in the country I went over and sat and heard him converse till nearly midnight, and when I retired it was with these thoughts, 'I have never spent a few hours so agreeably in my life.' He spent most of the time in

explaining Scripture and giving interesting anecdotes.” And it is not thinkable that that great winner of souls would have allowed the earnest young fellow who listened to him so eagerly to withdraw without some word concerning his personal salvation.

Garrettson’s conversion was not without signs and wonders, divine warnings and divine interpositions. It is difficult to say just when the process was begun. In a letter to Wesley in 1785 he wrote: “This spring is fourteen years since I was powerfully convinced without use of human means”; which would fix the date of his awakening as 1771, when he was nineteen years of age. In the same letter he says, “It was three years from my conviction before I was brought through the pangs of the new birth.” During these years much happened, and to his sensitive soul every event had a spiritual significance. Such entries as these are to be found in his Journal, which is a record of soul disclosures scarcely paralleled in religious literature: “One day as I was passing over a rapid stream, a log on which I had frequently gone gave way, and I was near being swept down the stream; after struggling awhile I got out, though much wounded among the sharp rocks. This query struck my mind with great weight, ‘What would have become of your soul had you been drowned?’ I wept bitterly, and prayed to the Lord under a sense of my guilt. Still my stubborn heart was not willing to submit, though I began to carry a little hell in my bosom.” How strange it is that remorse awakened by some grave peril so quickly dies out, and the vows made in moments of thankfulness over some deliverance from sudden death are soon forgotten! Garrettson a little later found himself in still greater danger. “In May, 1772, as I was riding out one afternoon, I went down a descent, over a large broad rock; my horse stumbled and threw me; and with the fall on the rock and the horse blundering over me I was beaten out of my senses. When I recovered in some measure I praised God, as well as I knew how, for my deliverance; and before I moved from the place I promised to serve him all the days of my life.” He at once procured the best religious books that he could obtain, and in retirement read much. Up to this time he had heard but two or three Methodist preachers. He had, as he says, the form of godliness; fasted once a week, prayed frequently daily in secret, and attended church regularly, but whenever he went to hear Methodist preaching, as he did now occasionally, his “poor foundations would shake,” especially under the preaching of George Shadford. When Asbury came into the country he went to hear him, and “his doctrine seemed as salve to a festering wound.” He followed the great preacher to another place, with this result: “He began to wind me about in such a manner that I found my sins in clusters as it were around me, and the law in its purity probing to the very bottom and discovering the defects of my heart; I was ready to cry out, ‘How does this stranger know me so well?’”

His father began to be troubled concerning him, and one night talked with him till midnight. “I have no objections,” said he, “to your being religious, but why should you turn from the Church?” Garrettson had already begun to have, it would appear, some leanings toward the Methodists. One day as he was riding home he met a young man who had been hearing the Methodists, who talked to him so sweetly about Jesus and his people, and recommended Christ in such a winning fashion, that Garrettson was deeply convinced that there was a reality in that religion, and that it was time for him to take an open stand. Another day he met with a zealous Methodist exhorter who asked him if he had been born again. Not long since a young friend of mine heard a woman of another denomination say with a sneer, “I wouldn’t

be a Methodist; why, the Methodists say you have to be born again.” Yes, indeed! But did not the Master also say that same thing?

Garrettson “could not easily forget the words of that pious young man”; they seemed to him like spears running through him! Thus matters continued until June, 1775, a day which Garrettson never forgot. As the day was breaking he awoke, “alarmed by an awful voice.” “You are not prepared to die,” was the ominous announcement which was “thundered down” upon his soul. Starting from his pillow, he cried out, “Lord, if this be the case, have mercy upon me.” “In the evening,” he says, “it was strongly pressed on my mind to go and hear a Methodist sermon. Though it was a very rainy evening I went, and for the first time heard Brother Ruff.” Shortly after he heard him again. Daniel Ruff was one of the earliest native preachers raised up in America; “honest, simple Daniel Ruff,” Asbury called him. There may be ground for controversy as to where were the beginnings of Methodism in America, but there can be no question as to where the first native preachers were brought into the ranks of the itinerant ministry. There was William Watters, who was born in Baltimore County, Maryland, in 1751, the year before Garrettson, and who was converted in 1771, and began to preach the following year. He has been called “the first native itinerant,” though recent investigations would seem to make it clear that Edward Evans, one of Whitefield’s converts in Philadelphia, who allied himself with the Methodists and was given permission to preach, is entitled to that distinction, even though, dying before the meeting of the first Conference in 1773, his name has no place on the official records of our American Methodism. And there was Philip Gatch, born in Maryland the same year as Watters, who entered the itinerancy and upon a distinguished career the same year as Watters, though his name does not appear in the Minutes until 1774. And there was Daniel Ruff, who was converted in Harford County in the great religious excitement which prevailed in that and Baltimore County during 1771. The next year his house became a “preaching place,” and in 1773 he began his itinerant ministry. It was after a sermon by this man that Garrettson came into the light. Let him tell the story in his own words: “After preaching was over I called in with Daniel Ruff at Mrs. Gough’s, and stayed until about nine o’clock. On my way home, being much distressed, I alighted from my horse in a lonely wood, and bowed my knee before the Lord; I sensibly felt two spirits, one on each hand. The good Spirit set forth to my innocent mind the beauties of religion, and I seemed almost ready to lay hold on my Saviour. Then would the enemy rise up on the other hand, and dress religion in as odious a garb as possible; yea, he seemed in a moment of time to set the world and the things of it in the most brilliant colors before me, telling me all those things should be mine if I would give up my false notions, and serve him. I continued on my knees a considerable time, and at last began to give way to the reasoning of the enemy. My tender feelings abated, and my tears were gone; my heart was hard, but I continued on my knees in a kind of meditation, and at last addressed my Maker thus: ‘Lord, spare me one year more, and by that time I can put my worldly affairs in such a train that I can serve thee.’ (I seemed as if I felt the two spirits with me.) The answer was, ‘Now is the accepted time.’ I then pleaded for six months, but was denied; one month, no; I then asked for one week, the answer was, ‘This is the time.’ ‘For some time the devil was silent, till I was denied one week in his service; then it was that he shot a powerful dart. ‘The God,’ said he, ‘you are attempting to serve is a hard master; and I would have you to desist from your endeavor.’ Carnal people know very little of this kind

of exercise; but it was as perceptible to me as if I had been conversing with two people face to face. As soon as this powerful temptation came I felt my heart rise sensibly, and immediately I arose from my knees with these words: ‘I will take my own time, and then I will serve thee.’ “I mounted my horse with a hard, unbelieving heart, unwilling to submit to Jesus. O, what a good God I had to deal with! I might in justice have been sent to hell. I had not rode a quarter of a mile before the Lord met me powerfully with these words: ‘I have come once more to offer you life and salvation, and it is the last time: choose or refuse.’ I was instantly surrounded with a divine power: heaven and hell were disclosed to view, and life and death were set before me. I do believe, if I had rejected this call, mercy would have been forever taken from me. I knew the very instant, when I submitted to the Lord and was willing that Christ should reign over me: I likewise knew the two sins which I parted with last, pride and unbelief. I threw the reins of my bridle on my horse’s neck, and putting my hands together, cried out, ‘Lord, I submit.’ “I was less than nothing in my own sight, and was now for the first time reconciled to the justice of God. The enmity of my heart was slain, the plan of salvation was open to me, I saw beauty in the perfection of the Deity, and I felt the power of faith and love that I had ever been a stranger to before.” If he knew that glorious hymn of Doddridge,

“’Tis done: the great transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s, and he is mine;
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine,”

he must have sung it, for it is said that having found the pearl of great price he was exceedingly happy, and began to shout the praises of his Redeemer. Modern conversions may be more decorous, and it may be they are just as complete, but when Garretson, who had not run the gamut of sin and shame in his personal life—our modern religious psychologists and advocates of “educational conversion” generously say that some demonstration on the part of a Jerry McAuley is pardonable—found God, “the stars seemed so many seraphs going forth in their Maker’s praise.” He praised God aloud. As he neared the house the servants heard him shouting and rushed out to meet him in surprise. It did not take them long to discover that something had happened. He called the family together, and his prayer was turned into praise. Temptations soon beset him, and for a time he was in perplexity. Great souls often have to wade through deep waters. But before many days passed there were indisputable evidences that his conversion was complete. One Sunday morning—this is one of the most interesting incidents in Garretson’s whole life—although he was still unsettled in his mind, from a sense of duty he summoned the household for prayer. “As I stood with a book in my hand in the act of giving out a hymn”—I give his own account of the event—“this thought powerfully struck my mind: ‘It is not right for you to keep your fellow creatures in bondage, you must let the oppressed go free.’ I knew it was that same blessed voice which had spoken to me before; till then I had never suspected that the practice of slavekeeping was wrong; I had not read a book on the subject or been told so by any. I paused a minute and then replied, ‘Lord, the oppressed *shall* go free’; and I was as clear of them in my mind as if I had never owned one. I told them they did not belong to me, and that I did not desire their services without making them a compensation. I was now at liberty to proceed in worship. After singing I kneeled to pray. Had I the tongue of

an angel I could not have fully described what I felt. All my dejection and that melancholy gloom which preyed upon me vanished in a moment, and a divine sweetness ran through my whole frame." Could anyone doubt that there had been a real change of heart after such an unexpected proof of the sincerity of his new purpose? It was in keeping, moreover, with Garretson's subsequent career. There at that home service was given the first earnest of his hatred of slavery and of his long fight for the oppressed. Freeborn Garretson was a new man in Christ Jesus. His conversion was as complete as that of Saint Paul, the currents of his thought and life having undergone in some respects quite as radical changes. From this hour, when it was borne in upon him that some things which hitherto he had considered right, were not right, he submitted all questions, all plans, all actions, all attitudes to the new standard which he found in Christ Jesus his Lord.

CHAPTER III THE SUMMONING VOICE

The matter of a call to the Christian ministry is a complex one. Spurgeon used to say that he was foreordained to be a preacher, and it does seem as if we should make that concession to his sturdy Calvinism, so remarkable was the prophecy uttered by Richard Knill, a representative of the London Missionary Society, who, a visitor to the parsonage in which Spurgeon's father lived, as he was leaving took the boy of ten years on his knee and said: "I do not know how it is, but I feel a solemn presentiment that this child will preach the gospel to thousands. So sure am I of this that when you, my little man, preach in Rowland Hill's Chapel, as you will one day, I should like you to give out the hymn commencing,

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,"

a prophecy which years later was fulfilled to the letter. Some men come into the ministry, as Burton says, "by the pull of numerous forces." Often the call is as the blowing of the wind, something mysterious, almost intangible even. Again it is as potent as the luminous cross seen by Constantine in his march to Rome, or the spirit-voices heard by Joan of Arc. Horace Bushnell used to tell of his grandmother, a godly woman, up in the wilds of Vermont, who started a religious public service, had her timid husband make the prayers, and called into service the talents of an unchristian young man of the region for the reading of a printed sermon from Sunday to Sunday. After a time she reached the conclusion that he had the making of a preacher in him, and said to him one day as he came from the pulpit that God wanted him to be a Methodist minister. "But I am not a Christian," he said. "No matter, you are called to be a Christian and a preacher both, in one call, as Saul was." That young man was Elijah Hedding. [Editor: Later a Methodist Episcopal Bishop (1780-1852)].

Methodism has never believed, as some good people seem to believe these days, that "anyone who feels a turn for it, in the ordinary sense of the word, is entitled to enter the ministry." It surely was not so in the early days of Methodism. Whitefield struggled long and hard between an inclination for the stage and the conviction that he must preach. "I have prayed a thousand times," he said, "till the sweat has dripped from my face like rain." It may be that Methodism has stood for a more marked call than some other denominations, but it most assuredly has believed in the necessity of a distinctive call. The Old Testament, as has been said, is largely a record of "calls"; likewise the biographies of Methodist preachers. So far as I am familiar with the biographical literature of Methodism I do not recall a single instance where one of our preachers has taken the field except upon command. Bishop Scott testifies that after his conversion the burden of the Lord came upon him and the Spirit of God commissioned him to preach with the solemn words, "Away! Away! labor for God and souls."

Thus also was Freeborn Garretson called to preach. It was not long after the happy experiences of grace recorded in the preceding chapter that he received "a strong impression" that he should go immediately to a certain place and declare to those whom he might find there what the Lord had done for him. He mounted his

horse, went to the designated place, found a company of friends and relatives, but the cross was too heavy for him, and after remaining there for several hours “without bearing testimony,” he returned home in “deep distress of soul.” That was the beginning of a conflict which was to continue for nearly a year before Garretson’s surrender to God was complete.

Shortly after this he felt it to be his duty to hold religious meetings in various places, principally at his own house, and at that of his brother John, where a blessed work of grace broke out. He had not yet joined the Methodists, though his leanings were now in that direction. God was leading him gradually. He had read some of Mr. Wesley’s writings and had some considerable knowledge of Methodist people, but at the beginning of his Christian life he felt a distinct repugnance to being known as a Methodist. It was his purpose to nurture his spiritual life by monastic fastings and in the gloom of cloister silences, but this unnatural and unscriptural resolve was as swiftly shattered by a shaft of religious experience as a forest tree is riven by lightning. What a wonderful teacher the Holy Spirit is! Garretson’s opposition to the Methodists shortly began to melt away. One Sunday he went to the church where he had been accustomed to worship, and noticed, possibly for the first time, that before the service the people “gathered in little companies, the old men talking about the price of grain, their farms and crops, and the younger people about horse-raising and the like.” The scene shocked his sensitive religious feelings, and the sermon later convinced him that there was no spiritual food for him there. That evening he went, to use his own phrase, “to hear Methodist preaching,” and it was of the sort to stir his soul to its depths, and he went home determined “to choose God’s people for my people.” A few days later he journeyed ten miles to attend a class meeting, “and was convinced that it was a prudential means”; and was his conclusion not a right one? The leaven of God’s purpose for him was working. The next step which Garretson was led to take was to invite Mr. Rodda, a Methodist itinerant whom he had already met, to come to his house and preach. If he did not want to become a preacher—and there is abundant proof that he did not—that was a dangerous thing for him to do, for those early Methodist preachers were on the watch everywhere for recruits. The very next day after Rodda’s arrival he peremptorily told Garretson that he must accompany him on his circuit, which the young man did, exhorting the people by Rodda’s direction. But at the end of nine days Garretson announced his intention of returning to his home, and when Rodda pressed him for the reason Garretson told him bluntly that he “was not disposed to be a traveling preacher,” as if that settled the question.

The details of Garretson’s struggles to escape what he must have suspected was the will of God for him would seem almost incredible to modern readers. They were as realistic and as wearing upon his health as were those of saint Francis. Rankin, having heard that his mind was in a tumult respecting the ministry, sent for him and gave him such salutary advice that the storm-tossed soul was comforted for the moment, but almost immediately Satan again buffeted him, and once more he is in doubt. He has an engagement to speak but is unwilling to use a text, and finds himself unable to speak with any degree of freedom. As he journeyed to another appointment he was in so great perplexity through doubt and fear that he even wished his horse would throw him and thus end his life. When he preached in his native place to a multitude who had come from far and near to hear him, just as he gave out

his text, “The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?” the burden of responsibility was so overpowering that he fainted and fell to the ground. Thus the conflicts continued month after month. There is a famous passage in his Journal which shows the straits he was in: “It was now the enemy told me there was no way for me to prevent or get clear of those itinerating impressions than to alter my condition in life. The thought was pleasing, insomuch that I employed carpenters to put an addition to my house.” “The object was soon fixed on and I paid her a visit, told her my mind, and set a time when I should expect to know her mind”; but, as he quaintly says, “the hand of the Lord was against it”; for the night before he was to learn her decision he had a vision of his duty, and to quote his own words, “When I went downstairs I met the object in the hall and told her that I was convinced that the Lord had a greater work for me to do, and gave up the matter and withdrew to my home.” But not yet even was his decision fixed. The enemy of his peace told him that the more he went among the Methodists, especially the preachers, the more his mind would be exercised about traveling. It was the itinerancy that affrighted him, as it has many others since that day. He was willing to preach near his home, but the thought of wandering up and down the earth, he knew not where, appalled him. In a letter to Mr. Wesley in 1785, nearly ten years after his joining the noble band of Methodist itinerants, he said, “Eight months elapsed after I was called to preach before I was willing to leave my all and go out. I wanted to live in retirement, and had almost got my own consent to sell what I had in the world and retire to a cell. God withdrew himself from me. . . . I was worn away to a skeleton. . . . Strong impressions I had to go forth in Jehovah’s name to preach the gospel. When I thought of it I was pained to the very heart; it seemed like death, so great was the sense I had of my weakness and ignorance.”

But at last the struggles came to an end. Let Garretson himself tell the story: “One day under deep distress I returned to my room, and appeared to be weary of life. I threw myself on the bed and within a few minutes was in a sound sleep, and I thought the devil came into the room and was about to lay hold on me. I thought the good angel spoke to me and said, ‘Will you go and preach the gospel?’ I cried out, ‘Lord, there are many who are more fitted for the work than I am; send them, for I am too ignorant.’ The good angel said, ‘There is a dispensation of the gospel committed unto you, and woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel. Will you go and preach the gospel?’ I knew it to be the voice of that same blessed Jesus that showed me that my sins were forgiven at the time of my conversion. There the devil was waiting and ready to drive me away. I cried out, ‘Lord, if thou wilt go with me I will go to the ends of the earth, or to the very mouth of hell, to preach the blessed gospel.’ In a moment I saw the devil vanish away, and I awoke filled with joy; yea, my soul was so happy and I had such a strong confidence that I thought I should never doubt again. I wanted to tell somebody of the exercise of my mind, and forever adored be the name of the Lord, he made a way for me.” The die was cast; henceforth for more than a half century he was to be a Methodist itinerant preacher, and of all the goodly company of itinerants there was no one who had a higher sense of the honor which had been conferred upon him by the divine summons to preach the gospel, or who realized more fully the necessity and import of such a setting apart for the work of the ministry. In 1816 there was published “An Open Letter to the Rev. Lyman Beecher,” in reply to a pamphlet written by him, and which, it seemed to the members of the New York Conference, contained some animadversions on the

Methodist ministry. The letter was written by Garrettson, and its publication authorized by the Conference. In it he says, among other things: "Had you pointed out some Scripture marks of a call and qualification for the pure ministry, I should have thanked you; but you seemed to lay the whole stress on your seminaries, regularity, and settlement, all of which are only the letter. As you neglected the most important part, permit me to touch on a few particulars. The first is, the soul-regenerating grace of God, and the knowledge of him as a sin-pardoning God. The second is, a call from God to the work. The third is, a qualification for the work.

"But how shall it be known that a man is called and qualified for the work? "1. He should have an evidence of God's love, and be so enlightened respecting divine things, as in some good degree to understand the spirituality of the Holy Scriptures, and to know the way of salvation. 2. A gift to edify, and a cordial reception from ministers and people, and to be made a blessing to the Church; 3. A pure love for souls; 4. Blest in his labors in bringing souls to Christ; 5. A love for study, and a thirst for more grace and wisdom; 6. A humble, pious walk with God, accompanied by integrity of soul in his work. He can say, 'Follow me, as I follow Christ,' giving evidence to the flock that he takes the oversight not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Whom the blessed God thus sets apart to minister in his sanctuary, he owns and blesses."

This was written forty years after he had heard and obeyed the Voice, and it scarcely need be said that his own life furnished the most complete confirmation of his opinions as here expressed concerning the prerequisite qualifications for a successful ministry.

CHAPTER 4 IN THE SADDLE

Ryle says that Christianity was saved to the world in the eighteenth century by "spiritual cavalry who scoured the country and were found everywhere." Stevens, in his History of American Methodism, uses the same figure when he refers to the Methodist itinerants as "evangelical cavalry." A glance through the table of contents of that book more than justifies such characterization: "Rapid Advance of the Church," "Methodism Enters Kentucky," "Garrettson Pioneers Methodism up the Hudson," "Asbury Itinerating in the South," "McKendree Goes to the West," "Colbert in the Wilderness," and the like. In every chapter you feel the rush and haste of those restless men. Every page breathes the resistless impulse of the Methodist evangelism. That classic of our Methodist literature, Asbury's Journal, abounds with references to his travels. Day after day he writes down with wearisome regularity, "I went," "I rode," "I came." During the forty-seven years of his itinerant career he rode more than two hundred and seventy-five thousand miles, almost all of them on horseback. One cannot understand early Methodist history unless he reads it as Asbury and Garrettson and the other itinerants traveled -- in the saddle.

About the time that Garrettson first heard of the Methodists the movements of the few itinerants who had already taken the field were so rapid that it is with difficulty that we follow them. Work for the year 1772 was planned on a large scale: Boardman was to enter New England, Wright to go to New York, Pilmoor to attack the South, and Asbury to remain in Philadelphia. In the autumn of that year Wesley directed Asbury to act as superintendent, and immediately the young leader started for the South, preaching as he went. In Baltimore he arranged a circuit of two hundred miles, with twenty-four appointments, to be covered by him every three weeks, and it was on one of these rounds that Garrettson first saw and heard him.

This same year Wesley sent reinforcements to America, Thomas Rankin and George Shadford, the former a Scotchman of rare energy and commanding success, the latter one of the most beautiful characters of early Methodism, and to whom Wesley gave the famous parting injunction: "I let you loose, George, on the great continent of America; publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good that you can."

In July, 1773, the first American Conference assembled in Philadelphia. An old print shows ten clerically frocked preachers in attendance: Thomas Rankin, Francis Asbury, Richard Boardman, Joseph Pilmoor, Richard Wright, George Shadford, Captain Thomas Webb, John King, Abraham Whitworth, and Joseph Yearbry, all Europeans, and all bent on the evangelization of the New World. Perhaps the most important action taken at this Conference was that the preachers should exchange at the end of every six months, which was what Asbury had desired from the beginning -- "a circulation of preachers" -- and undeniably one of the chief means of the unprecedented growth of Methodism in its first half century. Despite all the toils and hardships it involved, the early preachers regarded the itinerancy as one of the most glorious institutions of their Church.

The history of the Christian Church would seem to confirm their views. More than

once has Christianity been saved to the world by wandering preachers. They were itinerants who in the early centuries of the Christian era made Christianity the dominant religion. Eight hundred years later, when religion had become a stench and a scandal, and the entire hierarchical system, like a stranded ship, was breaking in pieces, there appeared one day an itinerant, Saint Francis of Assisi, who so influenced men that in a few years, from the sierras of Spain to the steppes of Russia, from the Tiber to the Trent, the Baltic Sea and the Thames, the old faith in its fullest vigor was preached in almost every town and hamlet. The great Reformation in the sixteenth century, of which John Wycliffe was the Morning Star, was heralded by the preaching of his itinerant priests; the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century was due in largest measure, under the blessing of God, to the chivalrous loyalty, the unflagging zeal, the persistent faith and toil of Methodist itinerants. What heroes they were! and with what superb abandon they went to their almost superhuman tasks! Literature does not disclose finer specimens of manhood, nor record deeds of more splendid valor.

Garrettson entered upon his long itinerant career in 1775, though it was not until the following year, at the Conference held in Baltimore, May 21, 1776, that he was formally received into the noble company of Methodist itinerants, men who, to use his own expression, were "thrust out" into the ministry. Was it not prophetic that he who was almost literally to live in the saddle was converted on horseback? It would seem so.

Garrettson's first appointment was to travel the Frederick Circuit with Daniel Rodda, where, under constant buffetings of Satan, repeated suggestions that he turn back home, and other trials so great that he was "tempted to envy the creeping insects," he nevertheless preached so effectively that many were awakened. At the end of six months he went to Fairfax Circuit, where he labored three months, when Rodda thought it expedient to send him into the region known as New Virginia, where the people became so deeply attached to him that when he preached his farewell sermon the people were "bathed in tears," and entreated him not to leave them.

His appointment the next year was to the famous Brunswick Circuit, where he was associated with Watters, at whose "preaching house" the Conference had been held, and John Tunnell, who was received on probation this year, a name fragrant to the Methodists of that early day, who after notable labors in the Middle States was sent in 1787 to East Tennessee, where he died three years later, his brethren bearing his remains back over the mountains that he might sleep among the hills of Virginia. What a brotherhood that of those early itinerants was! With what ties of affection, a common purpose, religious fervor, and a deathless devotion they were bound together! When Garrettson reached his circuit and began to preach such scenes of grace were witnessed that the people felt him to be "a young Shadford," a significant characterization inasmuch as a few years before Shadford had swept as a flame of fire through all that region.

Garrettson now itinerated southward into North Carolina, and at the Conference held at Leesburg, Virginia, in 1778 (which was presided over by Watters, the senior native itinerant, Asbury being in seclusion because of the war then in progress), he

was appointed to Kent Circuit, in Maryland. Here as elsewhere during these troublous years his faith was severely tested by the opposition which the preaching of those sturdy Methodist itinerants provoked, and by the prejudices against the Methodists which were created by the conditions, political and otherwise, incident to the Revolutionary War.

Garrettson seems to have had almost more than his share of persecution. His recital of some of his hardships in a letter written to John Wesley from Halifax in 1785 reads like Saint Paul's account of his sufferings in Second Corinthians: "Once I was imprisoned; twice beaten, left on the highway speechless and senseless; once shot at; guns and pistols presented at my breast; once delivered from an armed mob in the dead of night on the highway by a surprising flash of lightning; surrounded frequently by mobs; stoned frequently; I have had to escape for my life at dead time of night."

But he lacked Paul's gift of climax or he could have told a more thrilling story. His experiences were certainly thrilling enough. Much of the opposition was natural. It was of the sort which is always stirred up by the faithful preaching of the gospel. Paul met with it in almost every place. Wesley was repeatedly menaced by mobs. Garrettson was evil spoken of, refused permission to preach, and annoyed in petty ways.

The rage of his enemies oftener, however, took a more intimidating form. To a funeral which he conducted a woman came with the avowed intention of shooting him, but was thwarted of her design. At another service, as he was giving out a hymn, some twenty roughs rushed at him, the ringleader seizing him and pressing a pistol against his breast; but Garrettson had seen God in a dream and was not perturbed. He began to exhort, and soon the entire congregation was in tears.

One day while riding in Queen Anne County, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, a man who had formerly been a judge intercepted him, and taking his horse by the bridle began to beat the preacher over the head and shoulders with a club, calling meanwhile for his servants to assist him. When Garrettson saw some of them coming with a rope he thought it time to beat a retreat, which fortunately he was able to do, only to be overtaken a little later and so cruelly beaten that he fell from his horse unconscious. Providentially, as he says, a woman who had a lancet with her passed, and, bleeding him, as was the custom, he was restored to his senses, though it was supposed for a time that his injuries would prove fatal. One of his friends was shot, but not mortally, for entertaining him. He himself was in constant peril.

At Dover, Delaware, he had scarcely dismounted before he was surrounded by a mob, who cried lustily, "Hang him! hang him!" When he made an appointment to preach at the side of a river he was threatened with drowning, but one "dressed like a soldier" attended him on his journey, saying to him, "I heard you preach at such a time, and believe your doctrine to be true. I heard you were to be abused at the river today, and I equipped myself and have ridden twenty miles in your defense, and will go with you if it is a thousand miles and see who dare lay a hand upon you!"

Garrettson's severest trials, however, were not the issue of his religious activity, but in consequence of his refusal on conscientious grounds to take the "state oath" as it

was called, that is, an oath of allegiance to the United States of America, as required of all citizens when the war with Great Britain was begun. He declared himself a loyal American and a friend to the cause of freedom, but when he refused to take the oath because he thought it was so worded as to bind him to take up arms when called upon -- and he felt no disposition to bear "carnal weapons" -- he was told that he must leave the State, or go to jail.

The fact that he was a Methodist preacher augmented the feeling against him. All the Methodists were under suspicion throughout the war, and particularly during the early years; there were good reasons for it. Wesley's "Calm Address to the American Colonies" would have created prejudice against them if nothing else had been said or done, but several of the preachers were indiscreet. Rankin spoke so freely and imprudently on public affairs as to cause fear that his influence would be dangerous to the American cause. Rodda was so unwise as to distribute copies of the king's proclamation, and left the country under circumstances unfavorable to his reputation and hurtful to the interests of religion. When the times were about at the worst Shadford returned to England, and, indeed, two years after the Declaration of Independence not an English preacher remained in America except Asbury, who, at the risk of his life, deliberately resolved to continue to labor and to suffer with and for his American brethren. His sympathies were undoubtedly with his countrymen, but his unerring judgment, however, foresaw the inevitable outcome.

Lednum tells of a letter which Asbury wrote to Rankin in 1777 in which he expressed his belief that the American people would become a free and independent nation, and declared that he was too much knit in affection to many of them to leave them, and that Methodist preachers had a great work to do under God in America. The letter fell into the hands of the authorities in the Colonies and produced a change in their feelings toward him, but before this change took place there was much suffering.

It was asserted that the Methodist body was a Tory propaganda, though I can find no proof to establish the contention. In New York the leading members were thorough Loyalists; elsewhere the membership was divided in political sentiment, as were all communities at the time; but it is an indisputable fact that the prejudice against the Methodists was pronounced, and this prejudice was evidenced in much hostility. Jesse Lee, our first historian, says: "If a person was disposed to persecute a Methodist preacher it was only necessary to call him a Tory and then they might treat him as cruelly as they pleased." Judge White was arrested on the charge of being a Methodist, and presumptively a Tory, but after five weeks' detention was acquitted. Asbury was compelled to go into retirement for many months; part of the time in almost absolute concealment.

The native ministers who had been raised up, Watters, Gatch, Morrell, Ware, and Garrettson, were true-hearted Americans, and while the moral views and conscientious scruples of some of these, and many other Methodists, were not on general principles favorable to war, they were consistently loyal, even though many of them suffered persecution. It was a common experience for the preachers to be "honored" with tar and feathers. Caleb Pedicord was cruelly whipped, and carried his scars to the grave. Joseph Hartley was imprisoned, and during his confinement

preached through the gratings of his window to crowds of people. In many places our preachers were insulted, beaten, and maimed.

Garrettson, because of his refusal to subscribe to the oath, was the object of more frequent attacks than any other preacher of the time. But he was without personal fear, and when friends at Salisbury, knowing that a mob was lying in wait for him, urged him to escape, his answer was, "I have come to preach my Master's gospel, and I am not afraid to trust him with body and soul." On another occasion a company of twelve men made him a prisoner and started to take him to jail some distance away. While they were en route, suddenly the darkness of the night was shattered with "a very uncommon flash of lightning, and in less than a minute all my foes were dispersed."

But finally, in 1780, he was taken before a magistrate in Dorchester County, Maryland, and put in jail at Cambridge, the keys being hidden to prevent his friends from ministering to him. "I had a dirty floor for my bed," he writes, "my saddlebags for my pillow, and two large windows open with a cold east wind blowing upon me, but I had great consolation in my dear Lord and could say, 'Thy will be done.'" But he was by no means forsaken. Asbury wrote "to comfort him under his imprisonment," and sent him a volume of Rutherford's letters. He also interceded for him, visiting the governor of Maryland on his behalf, with the result that Garrettson was soon set at liberty. Like Chrysostom he could say, "I bless God that I am not afraid of the jail." Whatever happened to him was for the furtherance of the gospel. As he once wrote after he had been stoned, "This is but trifling if I can win souls to Jesus."

This period of trial for Garrettson and the other preachers was not without fruitage. Stevens says that not only did the Revolution prepare the societies for their organization as a distinct denomination, but it can be affirmed that American Methodism was born and passed its whole infancy in the invigorating struggle of the Revolution, and that its almost continual growth in such apparent adverse circumstances is one of the marvels of religious history. To this growth Garrettson contributed his full share, both in the heroic endurance of the trials which awaited him in every place and in the abundance of his labors and the zeal and success with which he prosecuted the work to which he had consecrated his life.

His labors during this period were tremendous, despite the grave impediments in his way. For instance, when he went to Sussex Circuit in 1781, Cornwallis was harassing the people of Virginia with his army, a condition unfriendly to the spread of Christianity. As this was the time of the siege and surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, he could hear the roar of cannon day and night. Lednum, an historian of Methodism, says that as the sum of this particular year's labor Garrettson traveled about five thousand miles and preached some five hundred sermons. These figures need not surprise us when the urgency of that early Methodist evangelism is recalled. Sin was an appalling fact, souls were in peril, the day of judgment was drawing on, men must be warned of their danger and told of a Saviour, and so Garrettson pushed on.

Thus from 1775 till 1784 he traveled and preached in Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, finding formalism and sin, churches abandoned and going to decay, and lost sheep, and leaving extensive circuits, vigorous societies, and people who blessed God for sending his servant among them; aiding in a multitude of ways, more than any man of the times, save Asbury, to give character and success to the denomination from New Jersey to South Carolina.

In September, 1784, when on the point of departing for this last-named State, that he might press the battle to the gates of the far South, Dr. Coke, who had been empowered by Mr. Wesley to organize the American societies into an independent Church, arrived in America, and his coming, together with the rush of the important events which followed, indefinitely postponed his proposed expedition. When Coke had met Garrettson in Delaware, and had conferred with Asbury and other preachers, and it had been decided to call a General Conference at Baltimore, he wrote in his Journal: "Here I met with an excellent young man, Freeborn Garrettson. He seems all meekness and love, and yet all activity. He makes me quite ashamed, for he invariably rises at four in the morning, and not only he but several others of the preachers. Him we sent off, like an arrow, from north to south, directing him to send messengers to the right and left and to gather all the preachers together at Baltimore on Christmas Eve." And this the appointed herald of the Christmas Conference did. "I set out for Virginia and Carolina," he writes, "and a tedious journey I had. My dear Master enabled me to ride about twelve hundred miles in about six weeks; and preach going and coming constantly. The Conference began on Christmas Day."

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CHAPTER 5

THE MISSIONARY

The day before Christmas, 1784, there might have been seen riding along a road leading into Baltimore a cavalcade more interesting in some ways than Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims. There was not to be seen such diversity of dress as shown in Stothard's picture of that famous English band of pilgrims, for this Maryland procession was made up of soberly dressed Methodist preachers, who had been guests of Henry Dorsey Gough, a man of large wealth, whose home, Perry Hall, some twelve miles from the city, was for years both a preaching place and haven of rest for the itinerants.

These were serious men who were riding that day from Perry Hall into Baltimore, for they were about to engage in the most important conference of Methodist preachers ever held in America; confident of divine guidance, for hitherto had Jehovah helped them; audacious because a continent now free stretched out before them to be taken for Christ. At ten o'clock the next morning the first session of the famous Christmas Conference assembled. Coke, as Wesley's representative, was in the chair. Of a total of eighty or more preachers nearly sixty were present, and of these we know the names of twenty-nine.

Beyond question the most conspicuous figure was Francis Asbury, who had been picked by Wesley for the general superintendency, but there were other men present equally worthy of notice, as, for instance, Whatcoat and Vasey, recently arrived in America, accredited messengers of Wesley; Reuben Ellis, "an excellent counselor and steady yoke fellow in Jesus"; Edward Dromgoole, an Irishman and a converted Romanist; John Haggerty, a trophy of John King's zeal, and who could preach both in English and in German; William Gill, pronounced by Dr. Benjamin Rush, the eminent physician, "the greatest divine he had ever heard"; Thomas Ware, afterward the founder of the denomination in New Jersey, and a successful preacher for a half century; Francis Poythress, who the year previous had borne the standard across the Alleghenies; Joseph Everett, "the roughest-spoken preacher that ever stood in the itinerant ranks"; Le Roy Cole, who was to live long, preach much, and do much good; William Glendenning, an erratic Scotchman; Nelson Reed, small of stature but mighty in spirit; James O'Kelly, then a most laborious and popular evangelist but later a rebellious controversialist; John Dickins, one of the ablest scholars of early Methodism; William Black, the first apostle to Nova Scotia, who had come to plead for helpers; Caleb Boyer and Ignatius Pigman, the former the Saint Paul and the latter the Apollos of the denomination; Jonathan Forrest, who was to be privileged to see the Church, which in this historic assembly he helped to found, increase from about 15,000 members to 1,000,000, and from 80 or more traveling preachers to over 4,000; and Freeborn Garrettson, tall, broad-shouldered, high-browed, grave but with a kindly smile, serene and self-poised, and as worthy as any of these named or any of the others present to sit in this first great Conference of the Church.

It is not within the scope of my purpose to tell of the momentous work of this Conference beyond indicating somewhat of its significance to Garrettson, and as denoting his right to be counted among the makers of our Methodism. After a great battle in which the carnage had been fearful and the valor and heroism of the soldiers

were sublime, the victorious commander presented to the survivors a medal with the name of the battle and the simple inscription, "I was there." Freeborn Garrettson was present when the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, its name determined upon, its first bishops consecrated, and where he himself was ordained an elder, and was likewise present at practically every important gathering in the interests of the Church from that notable day until his death in 1827.

It has been said that the itinerancy as organized at the Christmas Conference was a great missionary system, and this is true. But Methodism from the beginning was missionary in spirit. Others besides its great founder felt that the world was Methodism's parish. How else can the coming of Boardman, Pilmoor, Rankin, Shadford, Asbury, and others to these faraway shores be explained? George Whitefield crossed the Atlantic thirteen times. Thomas Coke sailed almost every sea, and was buried in the Indian Ocean. The sense of responsibility and the faith of those Methodist pioneers knew neither barriers nor limitations. Their field was the world. Christ had died for all men. How absurd would have sounded to them any talk about a "home field" or a "foreign field"! In their Bible they read only world-statements – "God so loved the world," "Go ye into all the world"; and to them, as it must be to us, the missionary appeal was a world-appeal. Whoever lifts an honest voice in Christ's name in whatever place stands at the center. With those early Methodist preachers it was not so much where they labored as how successfully. They were men who were willing to work anywhere, if they could help along the kingdom. So when John Wesley in the Leeds Conference in 1769 said, "We have a pressing call from our brethren at New York; who is willing to go?" he was not required to repeat the question.

It was very natural, therefore, that at the Christmas Conference the eyes of those missionary preachers should be upon the far horizons, and that when William Black, a Yorkshireman, through whose efforts in 1780 Methodism had been started in Nova Scotia, told of the prosperity of Zion in that land of snow and frost, and declared he must have help, the Conference was sympathetic with his plea and appointed Freeborn Garrettson and James O. Cromwell to that growing work.

These men received their appointment with unfeigned joy, and embarked about the middle of February, 1785. They reached Halifax after a stormy voyage of two weeks, found some "true friends of the gospel," one of whom hired a house for public worship, and within a week Garrettson had formed a society, consisting of six or seven members. Cromwell soon went to Shelburne, Garrettson remaining at Halifax, but with the idea of making a tour through the country later.

He remained in this difficult field for two years, in constant peril from the difficulties and dangers of an unsettled country and from the severities of the weather. Joshua Marsden, of the Wesleyan Conference, who went to Nova Scotia in 1800, in his "Narrative" of the mission says: "Those who are accustomed only to the cold of England cannot conceive of the intense severity of the winters in Nova Scotia; the snow is often from four to six feet deep; the ice upon the rivers is two feet thick; the cold penetrates the warmest rooms, the warmest clothes, and will render torpid the warmest constitutions; it often freezes to death those who lose their way

in the woods, or get bewildered in the thick and blinding fury of a snowdrift." But perils and discomforts were the common lot of the Methodist itinerants, and they were never daunted by them.

Garrettson had a rough time in Nova Scotia, once nearly losing his life in a snowstorm, and again in crossing a swollen river. What a striking account of this period this is: "After visiting the cities and towns and traversing the mountains and valleys, frequently on foot, with a knapsack to my back, up Indian paths in the wilderness where it was not expedient to take a horse, and having frequently to wade through morasses leg-deep in mud and water, and having frequently to satisfy hunger with a piece of bread and pork from my knapsack, and to quench my thirst from the brook, and to rest my weary limbs in a solitary wilderness on the leaves of the trees, I may truly say I went forth weeping, but thank God he was with me, and in every place his power was felt, and I may say souls were awakened and converted to God, and though I had to depend upon my private funds for clothing and traveling expenses, under my views of the prosperity of Zion I felt myself amply compensated for all my toil and never for a moment regretted the hardship of my lot in that cold, wild country."

He returned to the United States in the spring of 1787 by direction of Mr. Wesley, leaving a small Conference of preachers and some six hundred members, all of whom were attached to him and desired his return. There is a pathetic touch in the closing sentence of his Journal of his missionary life in this barren land: "My little funds were so reduced I had to sell part of my little traveling library, and after all when I came to my native place I had but one guinea left." Buckley, in his History of Methodism, says that "Garrettson's influence in Nova Scotia was almost equal to that of Wesley in Europe and Asbury in the United States"; and the influence of these years in the mission field of Nova Scotia upon himself was quite as pronounced. All through his long life he displayed the spirit of a missionary, and one of the last acts of his life was to make a bequest, the income of which would be sufficient to support a single missionary, as he expressed it, until the millennium.

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CHAPTER 6 THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE

While Garretson must ever be regarded as one of the guiding and molding personalities in giving a formative character to American Methodism in general, he was in a large and peculiar sense the founder of Methodism in the region extending northward from New York city, even as far as Canada, and continued the conspicuous representative of that whole territory for thirty years. The story of how he came to lead the hosts of God in this particular part of the field of battle glows with romance and abounds with indications of the divine purpose.

We have just seen how he left Nova Scotia at the bidding of Mr. Wesley, who had a high opinion of the young missionary and held him in much affection. His letters to him read like those of Paul to Timothy, and Garretson in his replies signed himself "Your affectionate though unworthy son." It was Mr. Wesley's wish that Garretson should be made the superintendent, or bishop, of the Methodist societies in the British dominions in America, and through Dr. Coke intimated his desire to the Conference held in Baltimore in May, 1787, and at which Garretson was present.

The proposal was apparently received with warm approval by the members of the Conference. Garretson, when asked by Bishop Coke if he would accept the appointment, replied that he would upon certain conditions, namely, that he would visit the lands in question, and if cordially received would return to the next Conference for ordination to the office of superintendent. Whereupon Coke gave him a commendatory letter to the brethren in the West Indies, and Garretson made his plans to start as soon as the Conference adjourned. He was absent from the Conference for a time, and during his absence something happened, for when the appointments were read, to his utter bewilderment he found himself presiding elder of the work in the Peninsula, the scene of his earlier labors.

What happened or why will probably never be known; it is one of the mysteries of our denominational history. The change in the mind of the Conference created much discussion at the time, but the reason for it was never given. Bangs attempts a solution in this fashion: "Probably knowing the value of his services in the Lord's vineyard, and being comparatively young as a Church, they were unwilling to have him so entirely separated from them."

That may have been the reason, but I am inclined to believe as being more probable that they refused the appointment because Wesley and Coke both desired it. That Conference was not cordially sympathetic with the expressed wishes of Wesley and Coke; it was even hostile at times. Most of the members were out of sorts with Dr. Coke for what they regarded as his "arbitrariness," and because of his propensity, as some thought, to stir up strife among the preachers. Lee, our first Methodist historian, says, "The Doctor saw that the preachers were pretty generally united against him, acknowledged his faults, begged pardon, and promised not to meddle with [their] affairs again when out of the United States."

There was also discussion, at times bitter, at this Conference, as to the relations of the American Methodists to Wesley, the outcome of which gave him great offense.

He wanted Whatcoat to be made joint superintendent with Asbury, but the preachers would have none of it and voted against it. It would seem as if those preachers were in no mood to support anything which either he or Dr. Coke proposed. They were friendly to Garretson, -- but unfriendly to his sponsors.

Garretson was confessedly disappointed and annoyed, but in later years he must have blessed God many, many times that the Conference took the action which it did. How often it transpires that our greatest happiness is to be found in the shadow of our most grievous disappointments! Had he gone to the West Indies, in all human probabilities he never would have met, as he did a short time later, the gracious woman who in 1793 became his wife, and thereafter was his companion and helpmeet in the highest sense. Nor would he likely have been assigned to the work which yielded the largest returns of his entire ministry, and with which his name will always be associated.

It all came about in this way: After having spent three months in the Peninsula, at the particular request of Bishop Asbury Garretson set out for Boston to open the work in that region, and it was by the merest chance that not he but Jesse Lee became the Apostle to New England. When on his journey he reached New York he found John Dickins in poor health, and Woolman Hickson, the other stationed preacher there, at the point of death. The situation was so critical that he consented to remain and take charge of the society until Conference, which met that year in Old John Street Church, being the first to be held in New York. It was an important session. There were urgent requests for preachers for many new places. It providentially happened that "many young itinerants, stalwart, and flaming with the zeal of the gospel, had appeared in the field about New York," and at the request of Bishop Asbury Garretson was asked to take charge of the band and "to extend the march of the Church up the Hudson."

This appointment made Garretson "very uneasy in mind," and he prayed for direction. God answered him in a dream. It was a wonderful vision. "It seemed," he says, "as if the whole country up the North River, east and west, even as far as Lake Champlain, was laid open to my view. The next day I requested the young men to meet me, and I told each of them where to begin and the way they were to go in forming their circuits, and I told them that I should go on to the extreme parts of the work, visiting the towns and cities, and on my return I should visit them and hold their quarterly meetings, and I had such a strong confidence in God that there would be a work that I appointed a time for each quarterly meeting and requested the preachers to take a public collection at every place where they preached. Accordingly, on my return I found my expectations fully answered, for the Lord was with the young men and began a glorious work, and their little salary was nearly made up at the first quarterly meetings, and before winter set in they all had comfortable circuits."

The members of this glorious company of intrepid and successful pioneers were Peter Moriarty, who officiated at Garretson's wedding, six years later; Albert Van Nostrand, Andrew Harpending, Cornelius Cooke, whose last will and testament, by which he committed his son to the care of Bishop Asbury to be educated at Cokesbury College, with funds for the purpose, is in my possession; Samuel J.

Talbot, Darius Dunham, David Kendall, Lemuel Smith, and Samuel Wigton.

As was to be expected, their energetic heralding of the gospel provoked discussion and started vague rumors. One startled man said: "I know not from whence they come, unless from the clouds." Others said, "They seem to be good men"; still others, "Nay, they are deceivers of the people." Garretson fell in with a traveler who had come from beyond Lake Champlain, where he had seen several of the preachers, and who excitedly told him the current report, that "the king of England had sent to this country a great many ministers to disaffect the people and bring about another war" -- a result likely to follow because of the unparalleled activity of these preacher-agents of England! Garretson was able, fortunately, to ease the man's mind, who after the conversation "seemed satisfied and much affected."

Nor was it without personal peril that Garretson pushed the battle, but as in other fields of labor nothing unnerved him, and nothing hindered the resistless onward march of the Church under his superb leadership. He was preeminently a leader, with gifts for oversight, administration, and inspiration, and no diocesan bishop ever wielded greater authority or carried forward enterprises to a larger success than did this episcopos of the Hudson River Valley. Coke in his Journal in 1789 says:

"In the country parts of this State, Freeborn Garretson, one of our presiding elders, has been greatly blessed and is endued with an uncommon talent for opening new places. With a set of inexperienced but zealous youths he has not only carried our work in this State as high as Lake Champlain, but has raised congregations in most of the States of New England and also in the little State of Vermont within about one hundred miles of Montreal."

He traveled between five and six thousand miles a year through a large part of New York State, parts of Connecticut and Vermont, and even to Boston and Rhode Island. His New York District extended from New Rochelle to Lake Champlain, and from the Eastern States westward to Utica, then quite a new and unsettled country, and it was his practice to go round this district, about a thousand miles, once every three months, preach upward of a hundred sermons, then return to New York, where he usually remained about two weeks. In three years there were more than three thousand members, -- twelve circuits, embracing nearly all the territory now included in the New York and Troy Conferences, having been formed. In 1789 one of his preachers on the Newburgh Circuit pushed southwest into the Wyoming Valley, which was soon added to the list of regular appointments.

In 1793 Garretson was appointed to the Philadelphia District, but the next year he was returned as Presiding Elder on the Dutchess District, and settled at Rhinebeck, and ever after, for more than thirty years, although he made frequent excursions to the South and East and to other parts of the country, his chief labors were within bounds of the New York Conference, a Conference which has had a notable history from its organization to the present time. Garretson preached in nearly every charge within its bounds, was presiding elder of various districts many times, and more than once was appointed Conference missionary, an appointment designed to give him an opportunity to travel at large, blessing all the societies with the quickening influences of his wide knowledge of denominational affairs and his rich experiences of grace in

Jesus Christ.

He was an itinerant to the end of his life. When he had come to his life's evening he said with much feeling, "I have been an itinerant now fifty-two years, and were I called back fifty years I would cheerfully retrace them in so glorious a cause in preference to sitting on a splendid earthly throne." It is to such self-denying devotion, to such fixedness of purpose, to such apostolic zeal, to such indifference to suffering, and to such glad-hearted willingness to make the greatest sacrifices for the gospel's sake that we are indebted for the establishment of our Methodism, its spirit, its development, and its progress within the bounds of the New York Conference and throughout the United States and the world. What trumpet-tongued voices these are which so mightily speak to us from the glorious past!

"You spring from men whose hearts and lives are pure;
Their aim was steadfast, as their purpose sure:
So live that children's children, in their day,
May bless such fathers' fathers as they pray."

* * * * *

CHAPTER 7

THE HOME ON THE HUDSON

A stranger, meeting Bishop Asbury on the prairies of Ohio, asked him abruptly, "Where are you from?" Asbury replied, "From Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or almost any place you please." This was literally true; he was a man without a home. Not so Freeborn Garrettson. To him it was given to have one of the most beautiful and far-famed of early Methodism's conspicuous homes, of which there were not a few. Who does not know of Perry Hall, the country home of Henry Dorsey Gough, of which mention has already been made, said to have been one of the most elegant country residences in America at the time, or of the spacious mansion of Governor Van Cortlandt, the first lieutenant-governor of New York State, and elected eighteen times to that same office -- that hearty Methodist whose influence helped Methodism throughout the State, or of Richard Bassett's in Delaware, or of General Russell's, whose wife was a sister of Patrick Henry, on the West Virginia Heights, or of Governor Tiffin's in Ohio, all "God's chosen cities of refuge for the Methodist itinerants"? Garrettson's home would compare favorably with any of these named, both as to location and amplexus, and in no one of them was a more gracious hospitality shown.

This home, which was called Wildercliffe, was situated on the east bank of the Hudson River at Rhinebeck, about three miles from the village, on high ground which commanded a fine view to the west and to the south. Asbury, who often visited the place, and who called it "Traveler's Rest" -- Boehm, his traveling companion, says, "The bishop delighted to visit that model household" -- speaks of the "good, simply elegant, useful house" with its "beautiful land and water prospect." The chief feature in the landscape was the noble Hudson, the house being near enough to the river to give the impression that the river was a part of the place. To the south the view stretched forty miles away to the Highlands at West Point, and westward across the river and the woodlands and waving fields on the opposite bank, up the slopes of the low-lying hills beyond, and on to the blue Catskills.

The outlook was grandly beautiful, and we can easily enter, in some measure at least, into Garrettson's feelings as in the last years of his life he was wont to seat himself in his chair beneath the trees and praise God audibly and with tears as he gazed on the enchanting prospect. In tranquil beauty the spot could scarcely be surpassed. Not long before his death Bishop Janes wrote to Miss Garrettson: "I doubt not you enjoy as keenly as ever the remarkable and almost redundant natural beauties with which your heavenly Father has surrounded you. Though your eye may become dim they will never fade from your mind."

But more remarkable even than the natural beauties" of the place was the atmosphere of the home. Dr. Bangs relates a conversation with a Presbyterian woman of New York, who was intimate with Mrs. Garrettson, and who after a visit to the family at Rhinebeck expressed her admiration for the order which prevailed there.

"I do not mean," she said, "the order of the farm or of the house, but I mean the religious order which prevails throughout every department; the orderly arrangement for family devotions, and the orderly manner in which the servants and all attached

to the household attend to their religious as well as to their other duties."

And who was responsible for all this? Garretson? Yes, in part. But Garretson, like Asbury, was to the end of his days a wanderer over the face of the earth. Most of the early preachers when they married located, but not Garretson. If ever a Methodist itinerant had social allurements or a home of luxurious ease to draw him out of the ranks of the traveling preachers it was he. But his sense of obligation was far too strong to permit him to cease traveling, even though he was most happily married and had an unusually comfortable home.

Had he been inclined to locate it is more than doubtful if Mrs. Garretson would have encouraged him in it. Some two years after their marriage she wrote in one of her letters to him: "I hope, my dear, you will find your soul more than ever engaged in the work of the Lord, and that you will improve every opportunity to bring glory to God. Keep ever in view the importance of every living soul you meet with, and let none pass without a word in season; 'tis expected from you and God has laid it on you. I despair of ever being a shining light; but I would wish to see you the most pious man in the world."

No sketch of Freeborn Garretson can be written without more than a passing notice of this remarkable woman, who, though she did despair of being a shining light, was beyond question, for more than a half century, the most notable woman of American Methodism. Lady Huntingdon did not wield a more beneficent influence in England than Catharine Livingston Garretson did in America.

In the first place, she was well born. Her father was Judge Robert R. Livingston, the head of a family of great distinction and of historical importance. The Livingston family, it is stated, was the wealthiest family in New York State, as well as one of the most honored in the American Colonies. Judge Livingston was a man of the highest character. Chief Justice Smith, who knew him well, was wont to say that were he banished to some lonely isle, and given the choice of one book and one friend, the book would be the Bible and the friend Robert R. Livingston.

Catharine Livingston's mother was Margaret Beekman, the daughter of Colonel Henry Beekman, one of the first settlers and largest landholders of Rhinebeck, a descendant of William Beekman, who was governor of what is now the State of Delaware under a commission from Sweden, and, like Judge Livingston, of the best lineage of the Colonies, and who helped to create its highest social life.

The Livingston home was at Clermont, a name which will forever be associated with Robert Fulton's conquest of the Hudson River, having been given to the first steamboat which he proudly navigated up the river, in honor of Chancellor Livingston, the distinguished son of Judge Livingston, and who was associated with Fulton in the enterprise. There Saturday, October 14, 1752, Catherine, the sixth child of the family, was born. It will be recalled that Freeborn Garretson was born August 15 of this same year, and was therefore only two months her senior.

Catharine Livingston had every reason to be proud of her ancestry and of her relationships. She often spoke of one of her ancestors, John Livingston, a noted

Presbyterian preacher of Scotland, a zealous Covenanter, twice suspended from his pastoral office because of his opposition to the government, and finally exiled in 1663. This was the Livingston who, when he was but twenty-seven years old, preached a sermon at Shotts which will live forever in the annals of great religious quickenings, some five hundred people being converted through that one discourse.

She was equally proud of her immediate relatives. Her eldest brother, Robert Livingston, was one of the committee of five who framed the Declaration of Independence, became the first Chancellor of the State of New York and administered the oath of office to Washington when inaugurated as President of the United States, who later appointed him Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Minister to France. Her youngest brother, Edward Livingston, was Mayor of New York, Senator from Louisiana, Secretary of State under President Jackson, and Minister to France. He wrote the Penal Code of Louisiana, a document so humane that Russia and Sweden bestowed honors upon its author. It is said of him that no American ever stood higher abroad than this statesman whose beneficent spirit embodied in law is the admiration of all ages, and that a distinguished German professor when introduced to him called him "the world's benefactor."

Catharine Livingston had five sisters, beautiful women of wit and more than ordinary talent. One of them, the eldest, married General Richard Montgomery, who fell at the storming of Quebec in 1775, two years after their marriage, "and the blow that made his wife a widow sent a thrill of sorrow through the whole land; even his foes wept over his bier and the governor of Quebec buried him with military honors." Another sister was the wife of General James Armstrong of the Revolutionary army. Judge Livingston was a patriot among patriots, and his home was a center of deep patriotic interest, where public movements were noted and discussed and no small sacrifices were made. It is not surprising that his children partook of his spirit.

Still another sister married Dr. Thomas Tillotson, of Rhinebeck, and it was in their home that Catharine Livingston first met Freeborn Garrettson. The story of this meeting is one of the most romantic incidents in Garrettson's career. Miss Livingston had already made the acquaintance of the Methodists, a devoted servant in the household at Clermont, who had joined the infant Methodist Church in New York, being instrumental in bringing about her conversion. It is difficult at this distance of time to realize all that this decision to cast in her lot with the Methodists involved or cost her. She moved in the highest ranks of society, was a correspondent of most of the distinguished women of her day, enjoyed the personal acquaintance of President Washington, and while after her conversion she carefully avoided every appearance of evil, it is said that even late in her prolonged life she could hardly help showing some chagrin when mentioning the fact that she had declined an invitation from him to dance with him at a party, the reason at the time, however, being not one of conscience* but the fact that she had engaged herself to another partner. Her religious decision required courage, firmness of purpose, and indifference to the speculations and banter of her friends. The change which she made was a radical one, and soon excited comment and even some objections. Her own family were more or less embarrassed and perplexed.

Edward Eggleston is responsible for the story that after her conversion one of her

brothers, seeing the joyousness of his favorite sister's Christian life at home, took her part in the family, but at the same time said to her, "Catharine, enjoy your religion here at home all you please, but for heaven's sake don't join those Methodists; why, down at the ferry, nobody belongs to them and there is nothing of them only three fishermen and a Negro." Whereupon the sister [Catharine], "one of the fairest flowers of our colonial life," blushed and spoke with much resolution: "Well, what if, as you say, now nobody belongs to the Methodists; I will join them and then you will say somebody does."

This story probably has a real basis of fact in the suggestion of her brother-in-law, Dr. Tillotson, who, when a class was to be formed in Rhinebeck, urged Miss Livingston, inasmuch as there was only one other who desired to join, one Jeremiah Van Auken, "to wait until there were more members," to which advice she gave this characteristic reply: "I join, Mr. Tillotson, that there may be more."

It was just before this incident that Freeborn Garretson, then scarcely thirty-five years of age, but a veteran in the service, appointed to labor in the State of New York with numerous young preachers whom he was to superintend, making his first journey northward, traveling by land and preaching wherever an opening might be made, reached Poughkeepsie, where he remained several days. While there he received a note from Dr. Tillotson, who was himself from Maryland and had heard much of Garretson in his native State, inviting him to his house at Rhinebeck. The invitation was accepted and, accompanied by one of his young preachers, he went to Rhinebeck, where a most gratifying welcome was given them. Wakeley, in his "Lost Chapters Recovered," says that it was in New York at the house of John Staples that Garretson first saw Miss Livingston; but he is in error, for on the written statement of Miss Garretson the first meeting took place at this time.

Often in later years Mrs. Garretson described the visit. Mr. Garretson preached several times during the few days he spent at Dr. Tillotson's to increasing congregations, and when he departed, Rhinebeck had been added to the circuit then forming. When he left he carried with him letters of introduction to Mrs. Livingston at Clermont, which was his first stop on his journey up the river.

His coming to Clermont made a profound sensation. At the breakfast table that morning Mrs. Livingston recited a text which had been deeply impressed on her mind during the night, "This day is salvation come to thine house," and when in the course of the day a stranger unexpectedly came they remembered. His holy bearing, devout conversation, and earnest prayers were truly felt in the family, who were often affected to tears. "He need not change his form to be an angel," said one of them. "O," said another who lived at a little distance, "when you have prayers, please send for me."

But while they were strangely moved by his conversation and the religious services which he held on the occasion of that visit, when subsequently it became known that he was interested in Miss Livingston, opposition to their marriage developed which occasioned both of them much sorrow. Their correspondence during this period, and indeed throughout their entire married life -- hundreds of their letters are preserved at Drew Theological Seminary -- is singularly beautiful.

Not infrequently before their marriage she refers to the "situation" which, she felt, "called for grace and wisdom," in such passages as these: "They all continue with respect to temporals as when you left. No one seems inclined to speak to me, and I feel not the least freedom to begin the subject. I am happy [though], and nothing does offend me." "I received your letter and was pleased to find that you had taken the resolution of going to Clermont. By the time you read this the result of your conference will be determined. I have great hopes you will be kindly received. Should it be otherwise I should have great need of uncommon support. There is nothing gives me more disquietude than that of not being permitted to receive your visits. My situation is on that account more painful than I can tell you, and throws an embarrassment over me that I can by no means conquer, and shall never be reconciled to. 'Tis this that led me to press you to once more see my brother."

During the period when Garretson was forbidden to come to Clermont they met at Miss Livingston's sister's house, but neither of them liked the idea of meeting thus clandestinely. It was her mother who was most opposed. One of her sisters assured Miss Livingston that her happiness was dear to most of her brothers and sisters, and that what opposition any of them might feel would disappear if only her mother could be prevailed upon.

This opposition, while not violent, was disquieting and annoying. Mrs. Livingston was not favorable to her daughter's going to the quarterly meetings which Mr. Garretson held, and while she did not forbid it would not give her the money necessary for the journey. Later Miss Livingston came into some property, and it was evidently their purpose to take a house in Albany, Miss Livingston writing that she expected sixty pounds soon, and that she would get some things for housekeeping. "I should be grieved," she adds, "if you should continue to have any fears on my account. The luxuries of life I am principled against; I wish them not; they long since lost their power to please a soul that is on the wing for eternity."

It would appear from the correspondence that the situation was most acute in 1793, when there were threats of disinheritance, but the loss of property did not daunt her, and we find her writing such sentiments as these:

"My DEAREST FRIEND: Without knowing of certain conveyance for this I sit down to tell you that I love you more perhaps than I have ever done."

In another letter, after stating that conditions had not changed, she concludes thus:

"Farewell, best of men; God loves, and let that suffice. Assured of his favor, what have we to fear from outward circumstances however gloomy. I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine."

In April she writes from New York, where she is visiting:

"Every expression of regard from you, my best friend, is dear to me; I thank you for them and wish myself more deserving. I should have written you before, but knew not until I heard from you where to direct. God grant us a happy meeting in the country. [The letter tells of her plan to go to visit the Tillotsons at Rhinebeck the

following week.] Oh, when will the dark clouds of displeasure be dispelled? There must be a cause why the Lord permits this opposition to his will. Still love and pray for your affectionate

“CATHARINE LIVINGSTON.”

Almost immediately after this her mother withdrew her opposition and gave her hearty consent to the marriage, and Catharine Livingston, as Walpole said of Lady Margaret Hastings's marriage with Ingham, “threw herself away on a Methodist preacher.” The wedding took place June 30, 1793, in the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Rhinebeck, New York, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. Peter Moriarty, and directly after the ceremony Mr. and Mrs. Garretson partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper together.

Berridge said that John Wesley and George Whitefield had only been saved from making a shipwreck of the cause by God's sending them “a pair of ferrets” for wives. Garretson never ceased to bless God for the noble woman whom God gave to him. Their home life was beautiful beyond words. As has been stated in another place, after their marriage Garretson was stationed at Philadelphia, where the yellow fever was raging with unusual virulence, but Mrs. Garretson did not hesitate to take the risk, and accompanied him.

The spring following they returned to New York, where Garretson purchased a farm at Rhinebeck, setting up housekeeping in an old Dutch farmhouse some miles from the river but near the church. This first dwelling was a humble one, suited to their narrow income, for since Mr. Garretson would not take a salary, and since, during his first years in the itinerancy, he had suffered serious financial loss, though his income was still sufficient for his moderate wants, and as Mrs. Garretson's income at this time was also a limited one, their experiences during the early years of their married life were more in unison with that of their brethren than has commonly been supposed.

In this place they lived five years, and here it was that their only child, Mary Rutherford Garretson, was born in 1794. At the end of this period he made an exchange for the place which for many years was to be a Methodist shrine. That year, having the house to build, Garretson did not travel, but remained at home to look after its construction. They moved into it in October, 1799, and Mrs. Garretson wrote in her diary: “The first night in family prayer, while my blessed husband was dedicating it to the Lord, the place was filled with His presence who in days of old filled the temple with His glory. Every heart rejoiced and felt that God was with us of a truth. Such was our introduction into our new habitation, and had we not cause to say with Joshua, ‘As for me and my house we will serve the Lord’?”

Garretson had felt no little anxiety about the propriety of building what was for those days an unusually fine house, but he made it a matter of prayer and the Lord gave him answers of peace. It was not ostentatious, but commodious and attractive. There were piazzas running around the house, from which one could enter the parlors and sitting-room through low windows. Within the house was much antique furniture, an ample library, many historical relics; the walls were adorned with family

portraits, among them that of Chancellor Livingston and other members of the Livingston family; and pictures of Garrettson and Asbury hung side by side.

Here the most generous hospitality was dispensed. Thither came the most distinguished statesmen, soldiers, and scholars of the time, and here with the grace and tact that came of high breeding and true goodness of heart Mrs. Garrettson presided. Here, too, it was that Garrettson was seen at his best. Bishop George once remarked how agreeably disappointed he had been in visiting Garrettson at his own house. Having only seen him occasionally at the General Conference, and having been under the necessity of differing from him on questions of ecclesiastical polity, he had formed the idea that Garrettson was austere in his manners and somewhat bigoted in his views; "but," said the bishop, "when I had the happiness of visiting him under his own roof and of observing the quiet order of his household, the happiness of his disposition, the kindness and attention with which he treated his friends and visitors, all my prejudices were banished and I now think that the worth of Brother Garrettson has not been duly estimated."

Garrettson was peculiarly attached to his brethren in the ministry, and the prophet's chamber of his home was rarely vacant. Dr. Bangs says that Garrettson never seemed so happy as when in the society of his brethren. To those of them with whom he was intimate he would unbosom himself without reserve. His house was the free resort of all who could visit him, and they were royally entertained. To his house, his table, and his heart Methodist ministers always received a cordial welcome. Asbury, Whatcoat, McKendree, Waugh, Hedding, Bangs, Lee, Abbott, and practically every man of note in our Church in America, Reece, Hannah, Thornton, Arthur, Pope, and Rigg from over the sea, Nott and Potter and other distinguished representatives of other Churches visited in this quiet Methodist home, and not one of the long line of welcome guests ever left this hospitable mansion without saying with Asbury, "I do believe God dwells in this house."

Mrs. Garrettson's solicitude for the itinerants was genuinely tender and altogether practical. "If any of our brethren should want linen," she wrote Mr. Garrettson, "send me the measure of the wrist and collar. I have a remnant of linen which will make two shirts and treasure an inclination to serve them." Her ministries to her husband during his frequent and protracted absences from home were constant. "I send you the Digester, a teakettle, carpet, some butter, and a pot of currant jelly," she writes. Again, "You often complain of colds; I wish you would wear a flannel waistcoat next your skin; this would effectually prevent it."

She possessed great personal dignity, and to the end of her days gave no evidence of abatement of intellectual vigor. Even in extreme age she continued to manifest a lively interest in ecclesiastical and political events with a fine perception of their ultimate results, and with an eye ever fixed upon their moral and religious bearings. With warm friendships among her kindred, and constant intercourse with the circle of wealth and political influence to which her family position attached her, and with the utmost refinement which the best social culture could impart, she aspired chiefly for holier sympathies and gloried most of all in counting herself a fellow citizen with the saints and of the household of God.

She died in 1849, and Dr. Olin, then president of Wesleyan University, could say without exaggeration in the sermon which he preached at her funeral, "I have not known another Christian at once so humble and prayerful and withal so fearless and confident." For more than thirty years after Mrs. Garrettson's death the same generous hospitality was dispensed at Wildercliffe by Miss Garrettson, who possessed a mind of vigor and versatility, was a lover of books and nature, had a brilliant imagination, and was a writer of considerable merit. In the later years her wonderful memory and rare descriptive gifts enabled her to picture with ease the historic days with which her parents were so conspicuously identified. She died in 1879.

*[Transcriber Endnote: This statement by the author would not necessarily indicate that Catharine Garrettson still participated in social dancing, or had a desire to do so, after her conversion. – DVM]

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CHAPTER 8

THE PREACHER AND TEACHER

Jesse Lee, who felt aggrieved that a notice of the Christmas Conference failed to reach him, says in his quaint way that Freeborn Garrettson undertook to travel to the South, but “being fond of preaching by the way” he failed to give timely notice to those preachers who were in the extremities of the work, and that for this reason they were not present. Garrettson surely did love to preach. He was not always a popular preacher, especially in the early years, because of his conscientious scruples against war and of his attitude toward slavery, but he preached his conviction always, being resolved, as he said, “to be found in my duty and to keep back no part of the counsel of God,” no matter what happened to him personally. Nor was he without his faults as a public speaker. His voice was unmusical and harsh, and usually keyed too high. This was so prejudicial to his success that before their marriage Mrs. Garrettson wrote to him: “May I again presume in the name of a sister to mention what I think is a fault in your speaking? When you are earnest you lose the natural tone of your voice. Everything that is unnatural seems to give pain. I always think you hurt yourself by the exertions you then make, and have no doubt but you do; though you may not be sensible of it at the time. The effect on your audience is disagreeable. It appears like anger. Speak strong words, they are proper, they are often necessary, but let it be in your own tone of voice, which is soft and persuasive.”

But while Garrettson had little fame as an orator, he was mighty as a preacher, judged by the effects produced and the results. And this must always be the final test of sermons: Do they accomplish their purpose? Garrettson was not a scholarly man. He made no pretensions to accurate scholarship. Sometimes it might seem that he was even hostile to an educated ministry, as, for instance, when speaking of primitive Methodist usages and how candidates were received into the ministry, he said: “I do not ask how many languages he understands or whether he can solve the problems of Euclid. Bunyan and Abbott had very little learning, but the power of God accompanied them. Knowing how to navigate a ship or solve the most difficult question in algebra has very little to do with the cure of souls.” That was the great thing with him, “the cure of souls”; and his preaching and his labors were all to that end. “It gives me much more pleasure to be a means of bringing sinners to Christ than to be thought a great preacher,” he says. Yet what a preacher he was!

Asbury in his Journal tells of “a great churchman, who after hearing Garrettson a second time was seized with conviction on his way home and fell down in the road and stayed a great part of the night crying to God for mercy. It was suggested to him that his house was on fire; his answer was, ‘It is better for me to lose my house than my soul.’” Garrettson’s converts were numbered by the thousands. “It may fairly be questioned whether any one minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church, or indeed any other Church during the same period, has been instrumental in the awakening and conversion of more sinners than he;” -- this was Bangs’s conclusion. His fidelity in soul-winning was so great as to gain the approval of the incomparable Asbury, who records that Garrettson talked to the landlord of a certain tavern on the subject of religion, and prayed with him at night and in the morning, though the man would not consent to call his family together. Asbury adds this comment: “Brother Garrettson will let no person escape a religious lecture that comes in his way. Sure he is faithful,

but what am I?"

Dr. Neale, the translator of so many of the beautiful hymns of the Eastern Church, once told of having seen in an English country church, in the rector's pew, a paper which looked like a placard but which on investigation proved to be a sermon headed "On the vanity and uncertainty of human life," and labeled "in case of an accident." He didn't propose to be sermonless if by any chance he should forget his discourse and leave it at home. The subject of the sermon held in reserve was always timely. Garrettson, though he did say when he first began to preach that his Bible at certain times seemed so small that he could not find a text, was never without a theme. He realized, as do few men, that the spirit of the Lord God was upon him, having appointed him to preach glad tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Preaching, with him, was always serious business. Some one has spoken of a certain style of orator "who mounted the rostrum, threw back his head, and left the consequences with God." But that was not Garrettson's style; his was "the preaching of a man aiming to be useful, aspiring to be good instead of great, penetrating by the arrows of truth into the sinner's heart, and pouring the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit. It was deep, experimental, and practical."

One who heard him often thus describes him: "His action in the pulpit was not graceful, though it was solemn and impressive. His sermons were sometimes enlivened by anecdotes of a character calculated to illustrate the points he was aiming to establish. He was likewise deficient in systematic arrangement and logical precision. This deficiency, however, was more than made up by the pointedness of his appeals to the conscience, the aptness of his illustrations from Scripture, the manner in which he explained and enforced the depth of Christian experience, and the holy fervor of spirit with which he delivered himself on all occasions. Like most other extemporaneous speakers, his mind sometimes seemed barren, and he failed, apparently for want of words, to express that on which his understanding appeared to be laboring. At other times his heart appeared full, his mind luminous, and he would pour forth a stream of gospel truth which abundantly refreshed the souls of God's people with the 'living waters.' And al though his gesticulations were somewhat awkward, there was that in his manner and matter which always rendered his preaching entertaining and useful; and seldom did the hearer tire under his administration of the word of life-point, pathos, and variety generally characterizing all his discourses."

Garrettson was a believer in the system of Methodist theology as held by Wesley, Fletcher, and others, and taught the Wesleyan doctrines all his life. Methodism was not a new theology, as we all know, though its preaching was in a real sense doctrinal, its effectiveness being proof of this fact, for the preaching which does not bring the central truths of the gospel home to the hearts of men cannot show such results as were seen in the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. Wesley was not a theologian in the sense that Augustine was; his chief business was not to define metaphysical theology, but to bring men into a saving relation with a personal God and thereby into a joyous religious experience. The same may be said of Garrettson. His theology was for use. Especially did he seek to inculcate his belief in the doctrine of sanctification. A few years after he began to travel, while in North Carolina, he

received the full baptism of the Holy Spirit, which, as did Nathan Bangs, he liked to refer to as "perfect love." This experience he rejoiced in continually and taught everywhere, and was himself a witness to its truth; for no man, Dr. Bangs says, ever gave more irrefutable evidence of the holiness of his heart and the blamelessness of his life.

He was a stanch defender of the faith, and sometimes was drawn into controversy. In Rhode Island he was much annoyed with Socinian teachings which were being inculcated in certain places, and preached against Socinianism. Never did his zeal show itself more intensely on any subject than when the real divinity, the eternal deity of Christ was called in question. He published a tract on this subject which showed his deep concern for this cardinal doctrine of Christianity. He felt it necessary on another occasion to preach against the peculiar sentiments of the Anabaptists, and was always ready to defend the tenets which he held.

His writings, while not extensive, were important, his first publication being an account of his early labors in the itinerancy, and the second a vigorous pamphlet against slavery. We have already seen how at his conversion Garrettson liberated all his own slaves, and thereafter his opposition to slavery as an institution was most pronounced and at times would seem to have been much in advance of his Church, although as early as 1780 the Conference of that year pronounced its judgment upon slavery as contrary to all laws, divine and human, and hurtful to society.

Garrettson was also a leader in the temperance movement, taking ground in 1822, when the new chapel was built in Rhinebeck, that not a drop of spirituous liquor should be used by the workmen in its erection. When told that such a thing was unheard of, and that it would be quite impossible for mechanics to labor without rum to strengthen them, he was obdurate and the work was accomplished in accordance with this prohibition. His attitude in regard to the drink evil was most remarkable, when the social practices of the times in which he lived and the circle in which his family moved are taken into consideration. Garrettson was by nature and grace a foe of all kinds of evil, and had both capacity and courage for reforms.

As the years multiplied he became more intense in all his work. "I am now bending over eternity and must soon go the way of all the earth. I endeavor in every sermon I preach to deliver it as if it were my last. I often think of my dear old friend, Bishop Asbury, who spent the last shred of his valuable life in the service of his great Master. I wish to do good, to be greatly taken up in my blessed Master's work, that my last days may be my best days." And God gave him the desire of his heart.

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CHAPTER 9 THE ECCLESIASTIC

Garrettson's ecclesiastical life covered the first half century of Methodism in America, and the record of his life for that period, on the authority of Stevens, is practically the history of the denomination. From the first Conference which he attended in Baltimore in 1776 to the last one, held in Troy, New York, in 1827, the year of his death, he was one of the conspicuous makers of Methodism, being active and zealous from the beginning of his ministerial career, and giving invaluable aid at all times to the shaping of its polity and the carrying forward of its enterprises. Once he had joined the Methodists he was a rigid denominationalist, jealous of the traditions of Methodism, a lover of discipline and order, standing always for a strict interpretation of its early usages, cautiously conservative, and ever manifesting the most stern and inflexible opposition to any innovation upon the established doctrines of the Church.

With Asbury and a few others he withstood the earliest attacks upon Wesleyan Methodism in 1778 and 1779, when a serious schism was threatened, although Garrettson did not like the use of that term in connection with the brethren in Virginia who had urged that the sacraments might be administered by certain preachers who should be chosen for that purpose, holding that they had been misrepresented; but beyond question the situation was a critical one, and it required all the combined wisdom, prudence, and forbearance of Garrettson, Asbury, and Watters to avert the disaster and effect a reconciliation. Asbury was tactful, but not more so than Garrettson. I doubt if there was a man in the itinerancy then or during his lifetime who had greater skill as a pacifier than Garrettson. His ability as a peacemaker amounted to genius. While he was a man of pronounced opinions, and at times was diametrically opposed to the proposals of some of his brethren, he was never an "irreconcilable." As he said late in life, "On the General Conference floor my brethren know that I have spoken the sentiments of my heart freely, always in favor of what I believed to be old Methodism, and I have upon all occasions as strenuously contended for peace and unanimity in the body and submission to the decisions of the majority."

Garrettson was one of the first of the American preachers with whom Dr. Coke conferred upon his arrival in 1784, and when he unfolded to him the plan of Mr. Wesley, Garrettson writes, "I was somewhat surprised when Mr. Wesley's plan of ordination was opened to me, and determined to sit in silence." That was so characteristic of Garrettson, his unwillingness to commit himself until he had thought the matter through! Wesley was his "father in God," Dr. Coke had come to America with the title of superintendent, but the young American, who had had nearly ten years of varied experiences in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and elsewhere, was their peer, with an inalienable right to individuality of judgment, a right which he always maintained.

We have seen that Garrettson was the "herald" of the Christmas Conference, an in the deliberations of that body he gave his counsel freely in all matters pertaining to the organization of the Church, and in all the important discussions he was a conspicuous figure. He must not be thought of merely or chiefly as an itinerant

preacher-evangelist, he was one of the wisest and most constructive counselors of the period. Asbury placed the highest reliance upon him. They frequently conferred together. Asbury was a most welcome guest in the home on the Hudson, where, sitting before the blazing fires of that hospitable mansion, they discussed the difficult questions of administration and planned for further itinerant advances. Whenever the leaders of the Church assembled Freeborn Garrettson was of the number. His name is to be found among the members of the famous Council, which was convened by Asbury in 1789. Nearly five years had passed since the Christmas Conference, and there had been no general meeting of the preachers. Asbury did not see the need of a General Conference, and proposed the formation of a Council, to be composed of men selected by himself, and with almost plenary powers. It met with much opposition and was only twice assembled.

Garrettson was present both times, but the scheme was not to his liking. It was too much of a close corporation, there was too great power vested, according to Asbury's plan, in the head of the Council, and Garrettson was a consistent opponent all his life of excessive episcopal authority. At the General Conference of 1792, during the memorable controversy which was aroused by James O'Kelly, one of the most consecrated of the preachers but with a fiery love of freedom, in his effort to secure a constitutional check to the absolute authority of the bishop, Garrettson supported him in the debate, but when O'Kelly's proposition was defeated, and he withdrew from the Conference, Garrettson refused to follow his example and was made a member of the committee appointed to treat with him. Garrettson could never be charged with recalcitrance. He once expressed an unwillingness for climatic reasons to accept an assignment to a certain field, and was long troubled thereafter in his conscience. But when he found himself in a minority he did not sulk, nor did he threaten.

The refusal of his brethren at the Conference in 1787 to comply with Mr. Wesley's request that he be made a superintendent was a disappointment, but it did not sour him. Stevens thinks that the reason why Garrettson was not elected a bishop at this time was because the preachers did not regard this Conference as a General Conference. It must be remembered, however, that Wesley had requested Bishop Coke to hold a General Conference at this time, and that much important business which properly belongs to a General Conference was done. As I have suggested in another place, the failure to elect Garrettson was probably due to the very evident hostility to Coke and Wesley, which was manifested in a variety of ways. One cannot help wondering what modifications our general superintendency would have undergone, if any, had the members of the Conference been in a mood to do as Wesley requested. It may be that there would have been some form of diocesan episcopacy, which certainly would have had the approval of Garrettson. His opinion on this subject was most pronounced.

At the last General Conference which he attended, that of 1824, according to Dr. Bangs the sessions were prolonged much beyond the usual time because of the extended debates on lay representation. "Though Mr. Garrettson, in coincidence with the majority of his brethren, thought it inexpedient, under present circumstances," he says, "to grant the prayer of the petitioners for a lay representation, yet he seemed to think that some modification in the general outlines of the government might be

usefully introduced. From what he has recorded in his Journal on this subject, it appears that he adhered to the last to the opinion that each Annual Conference should have its bishop, to travel annually through its bounds, to preside in its sessions, and to station, with suitable counsel, the preachers." Garrettson having, like Bishop Simpson, so strong a preference for a local diocesan episcopate, and being so firmly persuaded of the advantages of this kind of episcopal supervision and leadership, believing that better and more permanent good could be obtained for the Church by such a fixedness of episcopal jurisdiction, and the question having been so frequently discussed in their home, both Mrs. and Miss Garrettson requested that his views should be published in his biography.

There is before me as I write a letter from Nathan Bangs to Mrs. Garrettson, in which he says that he "submitted the subject to the Book Committee and book agents and they unanimously advised to suppress it." The reasons given for this action are interesting reading. In brief they are as follows: An authorized publication issued from the Book Rooms should not contain sentiments in contradiction to the general economy of the Church as sanctioned by the officers of the Concern; and, moreover, no good would be accomplished by the publication of the "plan," "as there is no probability of his views being carried into effect." And so the "article in question" was excluded from the Life of Garrettson which was brought out by the Book Concern within a few months after the date of the letter from which I have quoted. But it may be that this ecclesiastical statesman who held so tenaciously to these heretical views of episcopal supervision was not altogether wrong. He may have been wiser than his generation. Possibly it may be seen after a time, when redoubt after redoubt at the great centers in particular shall have been taken, that what we need is not so much general superintendency as local leadership.

The New York Conference met in New York May 20, 1811. Both Bishop Asbury and Bishop McKendree were present. One may read that the principal business was the election of delegates to the first delegated General Conference, to be held in the same city the following year. Henry Boehm, Bishop Asbury's traveling companion, who was also present, says: "There was considerable excitement and some electioneering," which may have been due to the fact that this was the first of the Conferences to elect delegates under the new order! Freeborn Garrettson headed the delegation, as he did at every subsequent election except 1820 until his death.

In more than one of these quadrennial Conferences the question of an elective presiding eldership was debated, Garrettson favoring it in every instance. At the important Conference of 1808, in some respects quite as important as the Christmas Conference, when Bishop Asbury retired from the Conference while a letter to him from Bishop Coke was read, he called Garrettson to the chair; and later in this same Conference, when the debate on presiding elders had run its course, it was Garrettson who moved that the vote be taken by ballot, which was done, with the result that the battle again went against the champions of an elective presiding eldership.

Again in 1812 this question was a foremost one, as indeed it was in many subsequent General Conferences, and concerning Garrettson's attitude in the matter his biographer says: "In respect to the question on which the General Conference have long been divided in sentiment, namely, whether the presiding elders should

continue to be appointed as they now are by the bishops, or be elected by the Annual Conferences, it is well known that Mr. Garrettson was in favor of their election by the Conferences. This is mentioned merely as an historical fact, without entering into the merits of the question, pro or con, or intending even to express an opinion in relation to it, any farther than to say that, whether right or wrong, no doubt can be entertained but that Mr. Garrettson acted from the purest motives, and according to the best dictates of his judgment."

But Garrettson needs no apologies for his words or actions. The views which he advocated were not unworthy either of his heart or his intellect; they are still held by many devotedly loyal Methodists, and there have been some indications here and there in our denominational history which would seem to denote that there is at least some considerable basis even now for an honest difference of opinion in this and the other questions of church polity to which Garrettson gave so much thought.

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CHAPTER 10

HIS PERSONALITY

What about Garretson himself? What manner of man was he? For, after all, it is the person which counts in every work, and in no realm of life more than in the ministry. It is the commonplace of homiletical literature that what a preacher is determines in the end the effect of what he teaches. Holiness of life is a prime requisite for the successful preaching of the Word; it is itself a sermon. As Massillon said, "The gospel of most people is the lives of the priests whom they observe." Men will not believe a preacher who does not himself exemplify the cardinal teachings of the New Testament. Vanity, inordinate ambition, self-esteem, avarice, pride, and all other sins are fatal to ministerial efficiency. How often do we hear it said, "I would have enjoyed that sermon if I did not know the man!" It was Garretson, more than what he said, that influenced men. He was indeed "an example of believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity." "My first conviction when a boy," said an eminent Presbyterian minister, "was received from observing Mr. Garretson as he was walking by. There was something so holy, so heavenly in his expression that I was strongly impressed with the truth of religion," Garretson's power being largely in his goodness.

He was a man of much prayer. He once said of Bishop Asbury that he prayed the most and prayed the best of any man he knew, and I doubt not that the mighty Asbury felt the same concerning him. It was Garretson's common practice whenever he visited a place to repair at the first opportunity to the church for private prayer. Those early Methodists believed in the efficacy of prayer. No matter, however trivial seemingly, could be determined without divine guidance, which they sought and found. Like Asbury, Garretson spent a part of every hour in prayer. He said that the sweetest hour in the twenty-four was the hour from four to five in the morning when he talked with Jehovah. God's ministers do not always find their revelations when standing on the altar steps; some of the most glorious visions come when they are alone with God. Luther used to say that he could not get on without two hours a day for his private devotions. Dr. Edward Norris Kirk, a Congregational minister of rare ability, confessed that his power as a preacher depended upon the degree of his communion with his Lord. Garretson was a man of power, being a man of prayer.

"That which gave such efficiency to his labor in the gospel," says his biographer, "was the 'unction of the Holy One' which rested upon him. No man, I believe, was more deeply sensible of the indispensableness of the Holy Spirit to enable the minister of Christ to succeed in his work than Mr. Garretson. Deriving all his doctrines and precepts from the pure fountain of divine truth, the Holy Scriptures, he made these his daily study; and being deeply conscious that he must have the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit to enable him rightly to understand and apply these truths, he was assiduous in his addresses to the throne of grace, firmly believing that God would 'give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' The success, therefore, which accompanied his public labors is not attributable to the force of human persuasion, or to the 'words of man's wisdom,' but to the 'demonstration of the Spirit' which accompanied his word."

Like many of the most successful preachers of the Christian centuries, Garretson

was a Mystic, "a friend of God," as the Christian Mystics of the fourteenth century were called, and finding his Lord "in the inward way." Like Bunyan and others, he saw visions and dreamed dreams. "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instructions." Both Mr. and Mrs. Garrettson profoundly believed in such spiritual influences. Their Journals and letters disclose what deep impressions were made upon them by "visions of the night," yet neither failed at all times "to try the spirits." How sane Garrettson was in the matter may be judged from this paragraph of his: "Some suppose that we ought not to put any dependence in dreams and visions. We should lay the same stress on them in this our day as wise and good men have done in all ages. Very great discoveries were made to Peter, Paul, and others in their night visions. But is there not a danger of laying too much stress on them? We are in danger from a variety of quarters: let us therefore bring everything to, and try it by the standard; taking the Spirit for our guide, and the written word for our rule, we shall without doubt go safe." He was neither fanatical nor foolish.

Of Garrettson's singleness of purpose there is abundant evidence. This last summer in London I found in a bookshop an old volume of sermons, the title of the first one of which attracted my attention; it was, "Second Motive in the Ministry." The writer made his meaning plain in the first paragraph, in which he referred to two persons of the Scriptures, "both of whom seemed to have not only the outward vocation but who were apparently sound at the heart, but who gradually sank beneath one besetting sin which slowly and surely preyed on the vitals of their spiritual life -- Balaam and Judas." The sin was the sin of covetousness, and was the admission of a second motive into the pursuit of the spiritual vocation, and each after passing through stage after stage of self-deception came to a fearful and hopeless end. There are other second motives; it is hard to keep an eye single to the glory of God, but this Garrettson did. Personal, selfish ambitions, which are so destructive of the high ideals of the soul, were utterly foreign to his thought and feeling, nor was he tempted to covetousness. During the entire course of his ministry he never received any pecuniary compensation, being fortunately so situated as not to need it. The purity of his intention was never questioned. He was devoid of all subtlety and guile, and being honest and sincere himself he could not indulge in a suspicious temper toward others.

It was once said to Robert Hall concerning Christmas Evans, "He has only one eye;" Hall replied, "Ah, but that's a piercer; why, sir, it is an eye to light an army through a wilderness in a dark night." Such was Garrettson's power of spiritual leadership, and it lay in this: he seems to have had but one thought, namely, to please God. This was his primary motive, and no secondary motive entered in to deflect him from the straight course which he had marked out for himself. He compelled confidence by the regnant purity of his motives and the dominant tone of his life. Like Paul, throughout his entire career he could say, "I seek not yours, but you."

Mrs. Garrettson, in a letter which she wrote after his death, gives a beautiful intimate portrait of him:

"Though my dearest friend" -- she almost invariably referred to him as her "dearest

friend;" I do not recall a single instance in all her correspondence where she addressed him by his Christian name, it is always "My dear love," or "My very dear friend," or "My dearest husband" -- "was often away, his punctuality in writing made his absence less tedious. I have now upward of a hundred letters, written from various places, in all which he speaks of the heavy cross he finds in being absent from a family he so much loved; but still was enabled to rejoice in the work to which the Lord called.

"When he had been home for any length of time he became absent-minded and often in great heaviness. When we walked together I would try and divert his mind by calling on him to view all nature in her loveliness. 'O, yes,' he would say, 'it is all very beautiful; and God is very bountiful to us, my dear; but the burden of the Lord! souls are perishing; and this country is no field for me.' There was a continual conflict, so that I dared not make the least opposition to his visiting the churches; for this was his element, and in this he was blest and made a blessing to others. . . .

"How many visits he made to Baltimore, to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, to Washington, Georgetown, to Philadelphia, Connecticut, Boston, Newport, Schenectady, Albany, New York, and other places, since we married, I am not able to enumerate; but all will tell in luminous characters, in that day when he and the children God has given him shall assemble at the judgment seat of the Most High. All times of the night, and often at the break of day, has he landed from the steamboat, and come to his welcome home, to bless and praise our God together for keeping us while apart, and uniting us again in health and safety at his footstool. . . .

"A more forgiving temper never existed in any mere mortal. He could keenly feel, but never to resent, never to retaliate. . . . While he was always ready to make amends, if he supposed that at any time he had spoken too hastily, he well knew at the same time what was due to his character and standing in the Church of God. . . . He was economical from principle, and always tried to instill into his family and in those over whom he had influence the right use of money. Show and parade he detested, calling it Saul's armor. He gave what he could and never laid up one cent of income. With a small property he has done more than many with ten times his means. With regard to himself, I always thought him too sparing, and often urged him to more personal liberality. If he had been a man of the world he would have become very rich. With respect to his diet, no one need be more temperate. He was almost too abstemious. Of animal food he ate very sparingly, sometimes none. He was very diligent, indeed, indefatigable, until the end was accomplished."

All in all his was a strong personality. He was a man of cordial spirit, unostentatious, without affectation, a Christian gentleman of the finest type, of rare conversational gifts and an amiable simplicity of manner, given to hospitality, unfailingly conscientious, ever more ready to commend than to censure, a lover of men, generously forgiving those who despitefully used him, without the passion of revenge, "of invincible gentleness," and with the heart of a hero.

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CHAPTER 11

THE ITINERANT'S LAST JOURNEY

"The path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." More than one saint has confirmed the truth of this beautiful proverb, and none more than Mr. Garrettson. As the years multiplied his life became more and more glorious. The last years, as to activity, were much like his other years. He was an itinerant unto the very end. At the Conference which was held in Middlebury, Vermont, in 1817 he was returned as supernumerary, an appointment which hurt him somewhat until he was assured that it was made with a view to his convenience, and in order that he might be at liberty to labor wherever he thought he could be most useful. He was thus given an "appointment at large" and continued to itinerate as before, even when his growing infirmities made it difficult for him to travel extensively. Still, as in other years, he must go out into the highways and byways seeking for the lost. "My mind," he says, "is after precious souls." Even when he remained at home for a short time now and again "to bless his household," he preached on the Sabbaths.

Friends came to visit him; itinerant preachers, always welcome, stopped on their journeyings to see him and counsel with him. The flowers in the garden at Wildercliffe bloomed for him, and the loved ones of the home circle counted it a joy to minister unto him. "I have had sweet seasons, in reading, writing, and family devotions," he writes. But the aging itinerant hero must away! He revisits the scenes of his early triumphs; again he journeys to Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. "In five months I have traveled about a thousand miles, and preached whenever and wherever I could find an opening." He makes still another tour of the South, continuing to show an active interest in all the affairs of the Church. In 1819 he helped to form the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, being one of the committee of three designated to prepare the constitution.

In 1826 he preached his semi-centennial sermon before the New York Conference, and was again appointed Conference missionary, and returning home was accompanied by Bishops McKendree and Hedding. Shortly after this, as will be seen by the following letter which appeared in *The Christian Advocate* in 1829, Mr. Garrettson and his daughter went to Schenectady. "The other day," the writer of the letter says, "while I was at the house of his much-respected and bereaved widow, I had the pleasure of looking over the last entry which Mr. Garrettson made in his diary, and of reading the last sentence which he ever wrote therein. I was particularly struck with it. It was written June 8, 1826, while at the house of his friend Dr. Nott, in Schenectady. It was as follows: 'Wednesday, 8. I am pleasantly situated and feel a pleasure in retirement. God is good to me.' I was not less struck with a little note directly opposite, supposed to have been penciled by one of his spiritual children, Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, which I here take the liberty to transcribe. It is as follows: 'He will not return to us, but we shall follow him. The close, "God is good to me"; -- the last words, O my Father! Here he stops! He says no more to us. But no doubt his last words in this diary -- "God is good to me" -- he will repeat forever! E. C., Sept. 3, 1829.'" Thus the years passed, filled with the goodness of God.

For several months before his death he seemed to feel the uncertainty of his life,

and an impression of the shortness of his stay made him reluctant to stand for election as a delegate to the General Conference of 1828. He was elected, however, though before the Conference assembled he had entered upon his reward. In August, 1827, he went to New York to spend Sunday, expecting to return the first of the week. Sunday morning, August 19, he preached in the Duane Street church what proved to be his last sermon, from the text, "But grow in grace," and administered the sacrament. The following day, in the home of his life long friend, Mr. George Suckley, he was seized with his last illness. The itinerant had made his last journey. He who had been in the saddle almost constantly for fifty-two years was now to find rest; from his labors. His wife and daughter hurried to him and remained with him through the days of terrible pain, but days also of quiet endurance and triumphant" faith. His daughter, in a letter to the Rev Richard Reece, who was the representative of the British Wesleyan Conference to the General Conference in 1824, and who became a strong friend of the Garrettson's, gives an account of this last illness from which I quote: "As he descended into the dark valley his views of the efficacy of the atonement became more and more enlarged.

Toward the last his strength was so much exhausted that articulation became a painful effort; but he would often, in a languid, feeble voice, say, 'I want to go home; I want to be with Jesus, I want to be with Jesus.' . . . A day or two before his departure I heard him say, 'And I shall see Mr. Wesley, too.' It appeared as if he was ruminating on the enjoyment of that world, upon the verge of which he then was -- enjoyments which he said a Christian could well understand. His mind seemed employed with subjects for the sweetest feelings of love and adoration. When asked how he did, he would answer, 'I feel love and good will to all mankind,' or, 'I see a beauty in the works of God' -- forgetting that the infirmities of the body were the subject of the inquiry. He had resigned his wife and daughter into the hand of God, and so great was his desire to be with Christ that parting with us was robbed of its bitterness. . . . Never can I hope to give you more than a faint idea when the spirit achieved that last victory and was ushered into the joy of the Lord. Encircled by his kind and affectionate friends, his brethren and his sons in the gospel, my venerable father lay apparently unconscious of everything that concerned him. We felt truly that he was only leaving the Church militant to join the Church triumphant. Just as the period of his departure approached one of the preachers broke forth in prayer, a prayer so elevated, so holy that it seemed to wrap the hearers above all sublunary consideration, and as he commended the dying saint into the hands of God he prayed that the mantle of the departing patriarch might rest on his surviving brethren. His prayer seemed answered; a divine influence pervaded the apartment; two of the preachers almost sank to the floor under a glorious sense of His presence who filleth immensity."

The last words which fell from his lips, spoken with the reverence of an adoring child of God, and with the exultation of a war-scarred veteran and conqueror, were, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" It was the morning of the 25th of September, 1827. The long journey had come to an end.