ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis "Rev. Richard Watson, 1781 - 1833, His Work and Religious Thought."

Richard Watson, in thirty seven years as a minister, served under the banners of both the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion and the Methodist New Connexion, spending the greater part of his ministry in the former. His contemporaries acknowledged him to be Methodism's foremost theologian, one of its outstanding preachers, the pre-eminent advocate of its missionary cause, and its chief voice in the struggle for the abolition of the practice of slavery. With the passing of the years, however, his attainments and achievements have been largely forgotten. Although first drawn to the subject through his Theological Institutes, the purpose of this study is to examine the most significant aspects not only of Watson's theological position, but also of his whole work in an effort to understand and evaluate his contributions to Methodist thought and its practical program.

Although no attempt has been made to produce a biography, the brief sketch included is designed to serve three ends: 1. to present in outline the events of Watson's life as the context within which to view his work, 2. to accentuate those facts of his religious experience and personal history which bore direct relationship to his work and thought, 3. to illuminate the personality and character of the man.

The second part of the study deals with the five main fields of activities in which Watson participated. They are presented not in the order of the importance of his contributions but in the more natural order in which they emerged in the course of his life. Watson's labors as a preacher and minister are examined first, followed by his work as the advocate, administrator, and defender of the Methodist missionary program. Partially as the results of his missionary contacts he became a combatant in the struggle against slavery to the extent that his voice, more than any other, aroused the indignation and action of the Methodist people against the practice. His antislavery interests caused him to become a participator in political activities to a greater degree than he would have otherwise. Since his writings were interwoven with every aspect of his work and thought, they are largely treated within their contexts; therefore, relatively few pages are given to them as a unit of his work.

In Part III, five facets of Watson's religious thought are examined and evaluated. Four of these were chosen because they were dealt with definitely in controversies: with Adam Clarke on the matters of reason and the eternal Sonship, with two correspondents on the witness of the Spirit, with Robert Southey, The Christian Guardian Magazine, and the men of the South London Circuit on matters concerning Methodist practices and government. Watson's ideas on the being and attributes of God are included because: 1. they represent the earliest, systematic statement on the subjects within Methodism, 2. they indicate the proclivity of his theology, and, 3. they, along with the other four, give a general cross section of his thought.

The appendices contain previously unprinted material by Watson. In varying stages of completion there are five sermons and one antislavery speech which were discovered among the papers of the archives of the Methodist Book Room. Two of the sermons have already been printed in altered forms. There are seven letters which were transcribed from those in the archives of the Methodist Missionary Society. They were written by Watson to missionary District Chairmen and constituted his last official acts for the missionary program. Included in the body of the paper are three letters from the same source, examples of

Use other side if necessary.

Watson's dealings with the government on behalf of missions.

Watson's outstanding contribution in religious thought was the clear definition of his position on the witness of the Spirit. The most lastingly significant aspects of his work were his shaping of the Methodist mission program and his efforts for the abolition of slavery.



REV. RICHARD WATSON,

1781 - 1833,

HIS WORK AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

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A thesis presented to the Faculty of
The University of Edinburgh
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

William H. Littleton

May, 1956

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DEDICATED

TO

PAT,

Whose love made this work possible,
Whose help made each day's labor lighter,

AND

BONNIE

Whose life has brought new joy to our home, and
Whose birth reminds us constantly of Scotland.

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PREFACE

Fame is a fickle mistress who soon forgets the vast majority of those who for a few brief moments share her smile. This present study concerns one whose name was a household word among the Methodists of his own day, and for two generations following, but is now, with the passing of a century and a half, almost completely forgotten even among his own folk. It is an attempt to examine, understand, and state the salient factors in the life, work, and religious thought of Richard Watson. Watson was both an interpreter of the Christian message and a leader in applying that message to religious and social problems. Since the gospel of Christ is timeless as well as timely, Watson might have something to say to a later generation.

This study is not a biography of Watson although it attempts to highlight those facts of his life which enable one to trace his mental and spiritual development and in a measure to recapture his personality. There have been three compilations of the simple facts of his life. The first, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, was written the year following his death by his friend and colleague in the ministry, Thomas Jackson. The value of this volume to any study of Watson is inestimable notwithstanding the fact that the narrative is sometimes colored by the close personal relationship which existed between the subject and the author. The remaining two volumes depend for the most part on Jackson's work but are significant

for the judgments they contain. An anonymously compiled Life of Rev. Richard Watson was published in New York in 1841; it reveals the estimate of Watson in American Methodism. E. J. Brailsford's Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate is a brief study made more than fifty years after Watson's death.

The part of this paper dealing with the work of Watson is an effort to state and evaluate the contributions he made in the five major areas of activity in which he participated. The five areas are not given in the order of the significance of his contributions but are presented in the natural manner in which they evolved throughout his life. His writings are given comparatively few pages in the second part of the study since they form the basis of the third part.

To present even an outline of all of Watson's religious thought would have been far beyond the scope of this study, and, indeed, it would have served little purpose. In order to limit the field, those subjects have been chosen upon which Watson entered into controversy at one time or another, thereby defining more exactly his own views. The one exception to this is chapter two which is included by virtue of its position as the first Methodist systematic statement of the doctrines of the existence and attributes of God.

To the archivist of the Methodist Book Room, Rev. J. H. Martin, is due a word of thanks for his kind assistance in making available the books and manuscripts in his care. No less helpful was Miss Irene Longstaff, archivist of the Methodist

Missionary Society, who graciously allowed the use of old records and manuscripts pertaining to the Missionary Society. The study is also indebted to the facilities of the British Museum for the examination of back issues of magazines, newspapers, and otherwise unavailable books.

In the preparation of this paper the advice of the Very Reverend Professors Hugh Watt and Charles Duthie has been invaluable. The work of Mrs. Robert A. Macoskey in typing the final copy is also appreciated. For assistance in reading the manuscript and for encouragement, the writer is indebted to his wife, Mrs. W. H. Littleton.

One word more of explanation is in order. In the footnotes of the following pages, Volume I. of Watson's Works is often quoted. That Volume is actually the second edition of Jackson's Memoirs of Watson which was published in 1834. The book listed in the footnotes as Jackson's Memoirs of Watson is in reality a slightly revised third edition published in 1840.

American usage has been followed throughout this paper in both spelling and grammar.

PART I

LIFE OF WATSON

CHAPTER I

LIFE

A. Early years and conversion, 1781-1795.

On February 22, 1781, Richard Watson was born at Barton-upon-Humber in Lincolnshire, the seventh of what were to be the eighteen children of Thomas and Ann Watson. Only Richard and three of his sisters, however, survived infancy. Thomas Watson, a native of Ledenham near Lincoln, was the son of a respectable farmer. Since the family had been so large that all could not be profitably employed in agriculture, Thomas had been trained in the business of saddler and spent his early life in Nottingham where it is probable that he served his apprenticeship. Thereafter, he moved to Bawtry where he met and married Richard's mother, Ann. From Bawtry, the Watson family moved to Barton-upon-Humber, the birthplace of Richard. The Methodists of Lincolnshire have every right to contemplate with pleasure the list of Lincolnshire's illustrious native sons, which includes John and Charles Wesley, Robert Newton, and Richard Watson.

Although Thomas Watson was a Dissenter, he had his young son baptized in St. Peter's Church in Barton. Richard was an excessively frail child, so much so that his parents did not expect him to survive his infancy, as many of his brothers and sisters did not. So delicate was his health and body that his

mother was compelled to hold him on a pillow to nurse him, lest the weight of his own feeble frame upon her arms might bruise or injure him.

In Richard's later years he might well have remembered and gained strength from the determination with which his father worshipped as he saw fit, regardless of the consequences. While residing in Barton, Thomas Watson, whose religious sentiments tended to be Calvinistic, united with some of his neighbors of a like mind in building a small chapel. A minister in the connexion of the Countess of Huntingdon was invited to officiate, and did so until it became obvious that the effort was doomed to failure for lack of a congregation large enough to support the chapel. While the minister remained, however, he lived in Watson's home; thus, Richard was early exposed to the life of a minister. When it became necessary to dispose of the chapel, Thomas insisted that the trustees sell it to the Methodists in order that it might remain a place of worship. Watson's determined efforts for the Dissenting cause did not ingratiate him with his customers; indeed, as a result of the chapel episode, his business declined to such an extent that the family left Barton and settled in Lincoln.

Soon after arriving in their new home Mr. Watson began attending a chapel of Countess Huntingdon's Connexion but subsequently connected himself with the Wesleyan Methodists. Although his family attended with him, there is no indication that Richard's religious inclinations surpassed those of any other child of his age.

Richard's education was begun while the family still

lived in Barton. At an early age he was entrusted to the care and instruction of an elderly lady who conducted a school only a few doors from his own home. When he was about six years old, he began attending a school held in a room adjoining St. Peter's Church by the Curate, Rev. Matthew Barnett, the clergyman by whom he had been baptized. During Richard's first quarter in the new school his instructor perceived his ability and requested his parents to allow him to begin the study of Latin. Although Thomas and Ann had anticipated no special education for their son save that which would allow him to enter an ordinary business, they readily complied with the Curate's request. Richard was apparently an eager and an apt student. At the tender age of six he is reported to have read the sixteen or eighteen volumes of a Universal History of Europe.[1] One is happy to discover, however, that he was a sufficiently normal boy for his mother to find it necessary to inquire often of Rev. Barnett whether his play were interfering with his studies, to which inquiries she invariably received a negative answer.

When the family moved to Lincoln, Richard, who was then about eight years old, was first sent to a school under the care of a Mr. Hescott. After two years he transferred to the public Grammar School which was then probably conducted by a Rev. Mr. Cuthwaite, assisted by a Rev. Mr. John Carter. He remained under their instruction until he was approaching his fourteenth year. During this same time his religious as well as

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1 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 7.

his educational development received a stimulus from a course of catechetical instruction under the direction of the minister of the chapel in Lady Huntingdon's Connexion. The catechism used was that of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Thus, the future defender of Wesleyan Methodist Arminianism first cut his theological teeth on the firm, solid meat of Calvinistic doctrine.

An anecdote related by Watson's biographer furnishes a window through which one may glimpse the personality of young Richard. Since his interests extended beyond his classical studies, his father bought him a four volume History of England. The stories of wars, adventures, and people of different manners completely captivated Richard. Every spare moment found him sitting with a volume on his knees, oblivious of all that was going on around him. So intense was his interest that he asked to be allowed to sit up at night to read and was painfully disappointed when the permission was withheld. Being a resourceful lad, he applied his mind to his problem and consequently took action to solve it. During the day he hid the iron bar which fastened the shutters of the shop. When night came, he, as a dutiful son, sympathised with the family plight and offered to sit up all night as a security against thieves. Not until later was his fraud discovered. To prevent the point of the story from being misconstrued, Jackson adds, "This ingenious scheme shows his passion for reading, but is not to be commended. It rather merited a sound flogging for the falsehood which it involved."[2]

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2 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

As Richard approached his fourteenth year his formal education was halted. Since his parents were unable to educate him for one of the professions, his father deemed it necessary that he should then begin to learn a business by which he could make an honorable living. Although his father suggested that he might become a draper or an iron-monger, Richard chose rather the trade of a carpenter and joiner. He was apprenticed for a term of seven years to a William Bescoby. Bescoby's shop being near that of his father, Richard resided at home.

Richard's appearance by the age of fourteen was somewhat striking. Whereas both of his parents were considerably below average height, he had reached his mature height of six feet two inches. As often happens in cases of rapid growth, Richard found himself at a loss in gracefully manipulating his added length of limbs. He walked or trotted with a shambling gait which gave the impression that his limbs were either flying in all directions or getting entangled with one another.[3] It is not difficult to imagine that he was a source of ridicule to the thoughtless.

Until he was fourteen Richard seems not to have been distinguished either for his great piety or any conspicuous lack of it. Shortly after his apprenticeship to Bescoby, however, his general spirit and attitude changed for the worse; and he became notorious for his impiety. A few doors from Watson's home lived a devout Methodist shoemaker who once found

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3 E. J. Brailsford, Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate, pp. 13-14.

it necessary to reprimand Richard for his indecorous behavior in the chapel, for which cause he became the constant object of the youth's jests and pranks. In all probability the reprimand had been deserved. On another occasion during the worship in the chapel Richard was apprehended in throwing horse-beans against the front of the gallery. When the action was reported to his father, he suffered a suitable correction which was so deeply resented by him at the moment that he resolved never to enter the Methodist Chapel again.[4] His conduct outside the chapel became even more reprehensible than it was inside. The road to the Methodist Chapel led beside the canal in Lincoln. A common sport for men and boys alike was to wait on the opposite bank of the canal and pelt the Methodists with whatever missiles were available as they passed to and from their place of worship. Richard often joined the group on the wrong bank. In spite of the religious influence of his home, he was quickly moving toward spiritual ruin. Of this period of his life Jackson says, "Possessing extraordinary energy of mind, it was not in his nature to rest in mediocrity. He must have been eminent either in good or evil; and now, having entered upon a downward course, the fearful probability was, that he would pursue it to his ruin."[5] But God had other plans for Richard Watson.

At this time there lived in Lincoln a watchmaker whose

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4 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," pp. 32-33.

5 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 11.

name was also Watson although there was no kinship between the two families. Richard sought the man's friendship and conversation since he could help him in the study of mathematics which he had continued after leaving the Grammar School. The watchmaker's wife, an ardent Calvinist, was better known for her loquacity than her piety; for she delighted in endless disputations on religious doctrines, particularly those involved in the differences between Calvin and Arminius. When Richard visited his friend to discuss matters mathematical, the wife invariably insisted on talking about her favorite topic regardless of his lack of either understanding or interest, especially since his father had deserted his earlier Calvinistic faith in favor of the Methodist Arminianism. Not only was the boy's patience tried by the woman but also his vanity was injured by the fact that the female inquisitor should so often press him with questions he could not answer; therefore, although he had been for some time absent from the Methodist Chapel, he decided to attend a few times in the hope of hearing arguments which would enable him to silence, or at least answer, the woman. Under the impetus of such a motive he again visited the place of worship of his father. The preacher was the Rev. George Sargent. No one could have been more surprised at the result of that service than was Richard Watson. He went seeking arguments with which to play as one would play with toys; he came away, having completely forgotten the arguments, in deep distress of spirit and consciousness of guilt for having sinned against God. "Life appeared as a dream; eternity, with all its realities, seemed to be just

at hand; and he was in danger of perishing everlastingly . . . He thought no more of supplying himself with arguments on the subject of 'fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute;' but of the way he might escape the wrath which was suspended over his head, and ready to break forth upon him."[6] In the days that followed, Richard labored under a conviction of his sins and a fear of God. Fortunately for him, there were those around him who had passed through the same dark valley who offered him comfort and a reminder that in faith in Christ there was pardon and eternal life. To one who had been brought up in a religious family such words and phrases as atonement and justification by faith were not new, but now they began to come alive for Richard for the first time. After a few days he relinquished himself to God through faith in Christ; God bore to him the witness of his pardon and adoption; his dread and fear gave way to love; he burst from the darkness of his trial into a sunlight more glorious than he had ever known before, the radiant light of God's love.

Watson's conversion was deep and true, and it immediately exhibited itself in all of his life. Whereas he had once stood across the canal and pelted the Methodists, he now became a willing and happy member of the society. The pleasure he had received from mischief was gone forever, and in its place was a serious, devout nature, still tempered with cheerfulness. The fruit of his change further revealed itself in the energy with

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6 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

which he applied himself to the secular duties of his trade, so that his proficiency and practical knowledge of his work showed a rapid and surprising increase. In spite of his youth, Jackson says, "His entire deportment was marked by such circumspection and decorum, that religious parents were accustomed to direct the attention of their children to him as an example; and in some instances, young people were so struck with the change which they saw in him, as to be deeply impressed with the reality and power of religion."[7] Thus, in Watson's fourteenth year God took the helm of his life and piloted it on His course throughout the remaining thirty-eight. In remembering the eventful year many years later, Watson said to his friend, Jabez Bunting, "God seized on me just at the right time. I should have been very wicked, if I had not been converted while young. I should have become very hardened."[8]

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7 Jackson, op. cit., p. 22.
8 Bunting, op. cit., p. 32.

B. First period with Wesleyan Methodists, 1796-1801.

Soon after Watson's conversion he began to lead a new life in more ways than one. Through the eyes of his new found faith he viewed the religious and moral condition of Lincoln, its people and its surrounding communities, with concern. Despite his youth, not long passed before he was delivering exhortations at prayer meetings and sometimes officiating as a local preacher. When God called Richard Watson, the boy apparently gave himself completely to Him. As yet, Richard could have no idea as to where his new faith would lead him; the days following his conversion might be likened to Paul's years in the desert. God did have plans for Richard, though, and chose to initiate them in His own way, if the young man were willing to follow.

At this time the Watson family circle included Mrs. Watson's mother, Mrs. Sarah Weeden, then over eighty years of age. Mrs. Weeden was a woman of devout spirit, a regular attender of her parish church and the local cathedral. Although she was not a member of the Methodist society, she often attended the worship there as well. Richard's experience could not have failed to strengthen the natural bond of affection between himself and his grandmother. On February 10, 1796, after Richard had left for the shop, Mrs. Weeden said to her granddaughter, "Ann, my dear, get the Prayer-Book, and read to me the whole of the burial service. I should like to hear it." Ann complied with her request. When the service had been read,

Mrs. Weeden said, "I very much wish to see Richard. Will any of you ask him to come home?" Richard was then sent for, but the answer returned that he could not be spared from his work. During the course of the day Mrs. Weeden expressed to her daughter that she was very sleepy; whereupon, her daughter replied, "I will fetch you a pillow, Mother; and you shall lean your head upon the table while you sit in your chair." When the pillow was brought, Mrs. Weeden placed her head upon it, closed her eyes, and opened them no more.

Upon Richard's return home in the evening he was deeply moved by the circumstances of the day. Since a prayer meeting was being held that night at the Methodist Chapel, he attended, seeking the consolation of worship. During the service he delivered an address to those assembled on the events in his home and the lessons they were calculated to teach. According to Jackson, his public ministry may be dated from this occasion on the night of his grandmother's death. It is of interest to note that the event took place twelve days before Richard's fifteenth birthday.

Watson's actual preaching ministry began the day after his fifteenth birthday. On February 23, 1796, he preached his first sermon in a cottage in the small village of Boothby-Graffoe, about seven miles from Lincoln, one of a series of villages later called Cliff Row.[1] In the weeks which followed he continued to labor among the villages of that section although the treatment he received was often offensive,

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1 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," p. 68.

even violent, as the marks on his clothes testified when he returned home. Watson's courage as well as his faith must have been tried more than once while he was still a babe in Christ. To be a Methodist in the vicinity of Lincoln in those days was not easy, as Richard's own activities prior to his conversion suggest. Only four years previous, a small band of Methodists led by a John Mayfield had held their Christmas Day service at 4:00 in the morning in order that it would not be disturbed. Despite their precaution a mob gathered; and while the worship was being conducted, Mayfield's garden and garden wall were destroyed and his property otherwise damaged.[2] The rioters were given such lenient treatment from the law that they were encouraged to go to greater extents against the good man.[3] Richard must have known of such instances besides knowing from first hand the attitudes of his former comrades, yet he persisted in his evangelical labors. Often he was accompanied by the very same shoemaker who had served as the object of his derision.

Richard soon discovered that there were obstacles other than hostile mobs. He, along with others, was threatened with persecution under obsolete laws. He, therefore, found it necessary to take the oaths of the Acts of Toleration and claim his right of legal protection. When he applied to the bench of Magistrates at the Quarter Sessions in Lincoln, however, request-

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2 A. Watmough, A History of Methodism in the Neighborhood and City of Lincoln, p. 34.

3 Ibid., p. 35.

ing that the oaths be administered and that he be licensed to preach, he was refused for the lame reason that, as he was an apprentice, his time was not his own.[4] A short time later he repeated his request to the Quarter Sessions at Newark and was duly licensed, by which act he became a preacher in the eyes of the law as well as a local preacher in the eyes of the Methodist societies.

A yet greater obstacle to Richard's dedication of his time to the preaching ministry lay close at hand. Over five years of his apprenticeship to Bescoby still remained, and under the existing conditions he had insufficient time for either study or preaching. He continued with his daily duties, however, trusting God to make his way plain; and He did. Although Bescoby was neither a particularly religious man nor a wealthy one, he perceived that the time Richard spent with him was permanently lost to the young man in view of the possibilities before him; therefore, he returned the indenture by which the lad was bound to him and out of generosity freed him. Richard must have taken the action as God's confirmation of the idea which he himself had already felt, and he informed his father that he believed himself to be called by God into the ministry. Shortly thereafter, the event occurred which propelled Watson into his new career.

When Richard began preaching following the death of his grandmother, he was barely fifteen years old. It was inevitable that as the word spread concerning the young preacher,

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4 E. J. Brailsford, Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate, p. 26.

many were drawn out of curiosity to hear what the lad had to say. Among other places, he was invited to visit and preach in the Methodist Chapel at Newark. It is reported that the alarm over the youthfulness of the preacher which some of the members of the congregation felt as he ascended the pulpit was increased when he read as his text, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."[5] They were not prepared for one so young to deal with the deep things of God. Jackson describes the scene: "As he proceeded in his discourse, however, and they heard from his lips some of the most important verities of the Christian revelation, delivered with gravity, and with a correctness both of sentiment and expression, that would have done honour to an aged Divine, their apprehensions on his account subsided, and they listened to his message with feelings of admiration and delight."[6] The people of Newark were to see more of the young man. When in the spring of 1796 the health of the regular minister, Rev. Thomas Cooper, failed, they remembered his preaching and requested him to come and take over Rev. Cooper's responsibilities for a while. Since their call for his aid coincided with his release from Bescoby, Richard agreed to undertake the task. Thus at the tender age of fifteen he began his traveling ministry.

Cooper was greatly impressed by his young assistant as the spring and summer months passed, so that he recommended Richard to the Conference as a person of more than usual talent

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5 John 4:24.

6 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, pp. 32-33.

and piety. In spite of this zealous recommendation the Conference would not allow the boy to be admitted on trial because of his youthful fifteen years and six months. Cooper was appointed that year to the Ashby-de-la-Zouch Circuit which, when he arrived, he found to entail more work than his still impaired health would allow. Although the Conference had refused to admit Richard, Cooper again sent for him and requested his assistance. Richard cheerfully joined the older man and remained with him throughout the entire year rendering acceptable service. When the Conference met in 1797, Cooper again presented the young man's case and was more successful. Richard was accepted on trial and even given credit for having traveled one year. Because of a clerical error his name was listed in the Conference Minutes as Robert Watson. In view of the limitations of length imposed by this study and the chapters dealing with Watson's work, no attempt will be made in this brief biographical sketch to evaluate his ministerial efforts and activities for the various periods of his life.

The Conference of 1797 appointed Watson to the Castle-Donington Circuit under his former minister, George Sargent, by whom he had been convicted of sin. Watson had no way at the time of realizing the significance of Castle-Donington for his life. He could not know that one day soon he would return to the town not as a minister. Neither could he know that a young boy who heard him preach once and remembered it for many years would some day become his son-in-law. The young lad who was only nine years Watson's junior was James Dixon. He remembered not only having heard Watson, but also on one or two occasions hav-

ing been in the same room with him, at which times, he later recalled, he was surprised at the "recklessness" of the conversation of the young minister.[7] Whether James Dixon's memory were shaded by subsequent events or whether Watson's theological curiosity were already expressing itself in daring views, one has no way of knowing for sure. In either case, it is true that Watson's keen intellect was searching for truths at random at a time when he most needed the guidance of one whose wisdom and experience were greater than his own.

One Sunday during the year of Watson's stay at Castle-Donington he preached for the congregation at Leicester. The people were so favorably impressed that they requested the Conference of 1798 to send him to them, which action was duly taken. Watson's year in that town appears to have been a completely happy one. He lived in the home of his superintendent, Rev. Jonathan Edmondson, who later described the young man as he was at this period: "As an inmate of our family he was social, friendly, and affectionate. He gave no trouble, was well-pleased with everything, and was greatly beloved by all under my roof. We never saw him out of temper. He never put on any lofty airs; but was humble, modest, and unassuming. We never had an angry word, an unkind look, or the slightest interruption of a most delightful friendship; and when he left us, at the end of the year, we sustained a loss in our domestic circle which was deeply deplored."[8] For the first time in Watson's career he was

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7 Richard Watson Dixon, The Life of James Dixon, p. 58.
8 Jackson, op. cit., p. 53.

placed under a man who tried to guide his study and theological education. Edmondson suggested to the young man a plan of reading and topics upon which to write essays. The two held long conversations on their reading and on theological subjects. One cannot help wondering if events might not have occurred differently had Edmondson's steadying hand remained on Watson's shoulder; but such was not to be.

The Conference of 1799 appointed Watson to Derby along with William Shelmerdine and Anthony Seckerson. It is reported that on the first Sunday after his arrival two persons were converted under his preaching.[9] From the point of view of Watson's own personal history, the year is significant, for it saw what was his maiden appearance in print. When an Address was circulated against the Methodists in Derby, he was requested to make a reply. Accordingly, he published "An Apology for the Methodists; in a Letter to the Rev. J. Hotham, B. A., Rector of St. Werburgh's, Derby; in answer to a pamphlet lately circulated among the inhabitants of Derby, entitled, 'An Address to the People called Methodists."

After completing a successful year at Derby Watson journeyed to London for the Conference of 1800. Since he had then traveled four years, when he had been examined as to his personal piety and doctrinal soundness, he was approved by his brethren and accepted into the full fellowship and responsibilities of the Christian ministry. He was assigned to serve the Hinckley Circuit. The year which began with such a promise of

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9 P. D. Gorrie, The Lives of Eminent Methodist Ministers, p. 143.

hope, however, held a blow, from which the wound was to leave its scar on Watson for the remainder of his life. During this period his studies were progressing rapidly. For some time he had been reading the Greek Testament; at the suggestion of Mr. Edmondson he began a study of Hebrew. His reading on theological subjects was voracious, and he was familiar with the various forms of error which had infested Christian doctrine along with the reasons by which they had been supported. Jackson suggests that his knowledge in this respect in conjunction with his "considerable readiness" in argumentation helped bring about the unfortunate incident of the year.[10] Sometimes he would, for the sake of argument, elicit the views of his friends and then defend the opposite view even if it might not be orthodox. Those who knew him well understood his purpose, but others did not.

Thus, it came about that in one of the villages in which he was accustomed to preach, the rumor was spread in his absence that he was an Arian and that he denied original sin, the proper Godhead, and the atonement of Christ. Watson knew nothing of the charges against him until he went to preach at the village and found the doors of the house in which he was to preach closed to him. The people even refused to extend to him a night's lodging. In what now seems like inexcusable impetuosity Watson resigned from the traveling ministry because of the affair. Many years later he himself frankly referred to the matter as "the day of his folly."[11] It is difficult to improve on

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10 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 70-71.
11 Bunting, op. cit., p. 69.

his mature judgment. In later years he was often heard to say, "I only regret that I did not lay my case before my brethren, and leave myself in their hands." At the time, however, he seems not to have cared about clearing his name or righting the wrong; his spirit was overcome by the pain of the allegations against him.

He apparently resigned in the late spring or early summer of 1801, although Bunting sets the time as late in 1800.[12] In the light of his action in joining the Methodist New Connexion some people subsequently wondered if there were not perhaps a motive other than the Hinckley affair which prompted his resignation. Those who knew Watson best staunchly denied such implications. Burdsall, with whom he had been associated with Cooper in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, said, "Never would he have left our Connexion, but for the usage of two or three of his brethren who had neither the mind nor the generosity that was requisite in order to the right treatment of this active and inquiring young man."[13] Thomas Jackson recounts that on numerous occasions he heard Watson avow that he resigned from the itinerant ministry "solely on account of the personal treatment with which he met, and not because of any alteration of his views respecting either the doctrine or the discipline of the Methodist body."[14] From his death-bed Watson related the entire story to James Dixon and repeated the reasons recorded by Jackson.

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12 Bunting, op. cit., p. 70.
13 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 50.
14 Ibid., p. 51.

Was Watson actually an Arian for a brief period? Were the allegations true? It seems hardly likely. At the preceding Conference he had been thoroughly examined on matters of doctrine by his brethren, and it seems impossible that so great a deviation could have been missed. It is also unlikely, if he did hold an unorthodox opinion, that it should have been discovered in his sermons to only one congregation. Furthermore, Watson himself flatly denied it in writing. Upon resigning, he returned to Castle-Donington to start a business. When his friend, Edmondson, heard the report that he was an Arian, the rumor had grown to include, also, that Watson had said Edmondson was of the same mind. Edmondson visited his friend in Castle-Donington on July 15th, 1801, to inquire into the truth of the matter. When he told him the report, Watson sat down immediately and wrote as follows:

> I am not myself an Arian, nor ever professed myself to be one; and, as I am convinced that Mr. Edmondson no more holds such opinions than myself, I never could say that Mr. E. disbelieved either the divinity of Christ or original sin. I believe that what I said respecting Mr. Edmondson's opinions related entirely to the revival, so called, and to some peculiar opinions advanced by the advocates of it.[15]

He signed the note and gave it to Edmondson who carefully preserved it until it was published by Jackson. Quite obviously, the allegations made against Watson were unfounded and would have been determined to be so if he had allowed a District Meeting to clear his name rather than resign; but he did not.

In the Conference Minutes of 1801, in answer to ques-

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15 Watson, op. cit., p. 50.

tion six, "Who have desisted from traveling?" is listed Richard Watson, along with two others, "by their own choice." Thus, the sun seemed to be setting on Watson's ministry in the early morning of his career.

C. Period with New Connexion, 1801-1811.

One cannot help feeling a tinge of sympathy for Richard Watson in the period immediately following his resignation from the traveling ministry of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion. He had heard and accepted God's call to preach, only to be thwarted by circumstances which might have taxed the understanding and patience of one having far more experience than a twenty year old lad. The decision was made, however, and there was no turning back. Many years later when he was discussing the period with his friend Bunting, he confessed that while traveling from Birmingham to Redditch on a business trip his reflections almost overpowered him; he said, "I think it was impossible for a fiend of hell, or a lost spirit, to feel more truly wretched than I did in that hour."[1]

When Watson resigned he chose not to return to his old home in Lincoln. Brailsford suggests that he shrank from facing his friends who, while they might sympathise with him, could not help but be disappointed at the turn his life had taken.[2] Whatever the reason, he decided first to remain in Hinckley and there begin a business; but the venture proved to be a failure. The attempt lasted but a few weeks, for by July of 1801 he had moved to Castle-Donington to begin anew; but this

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1 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," p. 34.

2 E. J. Brailsford, Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate, pp. 34-35.

effort, too, was doomed to mediocrity if not to failure. Watson might well have perceived the hand of God placing, as it were, a blight on all his labor save that to which he was called.

In at least one undertaking he was successful. While in Castle-Donington he won the hand of Mary Henshaw in marriage, an event which was to influence Watson more than he could realize, for the new Mrs. Watson's father was a local preacher of the Methodist New Connexion. After his marriage Watson is reported to have made inquiries of one of his Wesleyan brethren as to the possibility of his being readmitted into the ministry of that body. The overture met with little encouragement, however, for the most part because of his altered status as a married man.[3] Watson, discouraged by the opinions of the one of whom he made the inquiries, put out of his mind the work of the ministry for a while and concentrated on his business. For some months even his regular attendance at public worship almost ceased, and his intercourse with former Christian friends discontinued. All his energies went into his business, but in that he was frustrated at every step of the way. Everything seemed wrong and out of gear for him. In nothing was he happy and successful during this period except in his marriage.

Just as the prodigal son must have been surprised when he first realized his condition, Watson suddenly awoke to the fact that he had traveled a long way down the road to a far country. Through conversations with his father-in-law, Mr. Henshaw, he was induced to unite with a small society of the

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3 Bunting, op. cit., p. 70.

New Connexion which met at Hemington, an agricultural village about a mile from Castle-Donington. Once again in the fellowship he loved so well, his old ardor for the work of the ministry returned along with his piety. Perhaps it could better be said that the trappings donned by Watson as a defence against his disappointments fell away, and the man himself again shone through.

Having become a member of the society of the New Connexion, Watson was issued an invitation, which he accepted, to preach in the chapel of that body in Nottingham. He was given other opportunities of using his talent and eventually became a local preacher for the New Connexion. The transition was not difficult since it involved no doctrinal alterations. The Methodist New Connexion had left the Wesleyan body not because of theological differences but because of policy and government. Once Watson became a local preacher, the path opened before him. He was then invited to become an itinerant preacher, which invitation he eagerly accepted. Thus it was that in the autumn of 1803 he was asked to supply the place of another minister in Manchester. One can well imagine the joy and anticipation which stirred within Watson as he made his way from Castle-Donington to Stockport where he was to reside for the new appointment. Two and a half years had passed since the affair at Hinckley, and at last the wanderer was returning home to his place in the ministry, - but not quite.

In the Conference Minutes of the New Connexion for 1804 R. Watson is listed as remaining on trial after having traveled one year. He was returned to Manchester where, as his letters

in later years indicate, he formed many lasting friendships which were unimpaired by subsequent events. The years in Manchester were happy ones for Watson; his ministry was well attended and appreciated; his health was not as yet a source of serious concern; he had been readily accepted into the fellowship of his new brethren of the ministry.

The respect which Watson's talents and personality commanded can be seen in the fact that at the Conference of 1805 he was made assistant Secretary although he had been in the body only two years. He again returned to Manchester. Since his activities as a writer are examined more closely in a separate chapter, no attempt will be made to enumerate his works in this sketch. Suffice it to say, his labors for the New Connexion included many articles, the production of which began during his stay in Manchester, for their Magazine. Of this period of his work Brailsford says, "Thoughtful men outside his own congregations were eager to listen, and the common people . . . shrewd, warm-hearted mechanics . . . heard him gladly in the streets, as well as in the chapel."[4]

Watson was removed from Manchester and assigned to Liverpool in the spring of 1806. In his new station he served only one chapel to which very few other pastoral and official duties were added. Since a great deal of his time was at his own disposal, he employed it in taking advantage of the intellectual, literary, and other opportunities offered in a city the size of Liverpool. As in Manchester, he formed many friendships

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4 Brailsford, op. cit., p. 37.

which outlasted his labors for the New Connexion. By July of this year his own family had grown to include a son, Thomas, and a daughter, Mary.[5]

At the Conference of 1807 Watson, who by then had traveled for the New Connexion for four years, finished his probation and was received into full standing. As proof of the esteem of his brethren he was named Secretary of the Conference for the coming year and requested to write the Pastoral Address. He was reappointed to Liverpool where he continued an acceptable ministry. Besides his pastoral duties his other activities of this period offer cause for consideration. One of Watson's closest friends in Liverpool was a printer, Mr. Kaye, with whom he collaborated in several literary endeavors. Although writing was no obsession with Watson, it seems to have been a part of the man. If he had not one thing to write about, he would write about another; and it was not until later that he found his true fields of labor in this respect. At this time he was still a man developing a talent without having discovered the proper expression of it. During his stay in Liverpool he produced for Kaye's press a popular description of Liverpool and a brief history of the reign of George III. He further joined with his friend in 1808 in the management of a newspaper. Watson was seeking to find himself, but the end of his search lay in the future.

By the time the Conference met in Huddersfield in 1808 Watson's health was in a precarious condition. As early

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5 Compiled, Life of The Rev. Richard Watson, p. 69.

as the summer of 1806 he mentioned in a letter to his friend, Thomas Faulkner of Manchester, the difficulty he was having with his lungs which was apparently not then a new thing.[6] Intermittently, throughout the next two years he suffered until his condition was such that the Conference reappointed him to Liverpool rather than move him. At the Conference he was again made Secretary and again wrote the Pastoral Address. Because of his impaired health he was unable to carry the full load of pastoral responsibilities during the year and did little more than preach, but such was his preaching that sixty-five members were added to the Circuit during the year.[7]

Rather than improve, Watson's health continued to decline, so that he was unable to take an appointment from the Conference of 1809 and returned to Liverpool as a supernumerary preacher. During the autumn he described his condition to a friend in a letter, "I continue in a very precarious state. I am not wholly free from the spitting of blood, and have almost constant pain in my breast. I at present preach little; and with difficulty perform that share of duty."[8] What thoughts must have been in his mind through the long quiet hours of that year? Twice in the very midst of his promise and hope of service he had been struck down. Was there any bitterness in his heart, any resentment? Quite the contrary, his spirit seems to have become stronger even as his body weakened. In the letter quoted

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6 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 68.

7 Ibid., p. 87.

8 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, pp. 122-24, from a letter to Mr. John Faulkner of Manchester.

above he also says, "What is the world without God? What are even its highest pleasures? And what, then, its frowns? True, vital religion has always been regarded by me as equally essential to the happiness of this life, as to that of the next; and, therefore, we much injure ourselves when we would put off its enjoyments to some future period of life, or perhaps to its last gasping moments. For why would we be unhappy so long, when happiness is now within our reach? What is religion but love to the best of beings; confidence in the most faithful of beings; and friendship with the greatest of beings?"[9] At various times, chiefly in his earlier years, Watson indulged in writing poetry. A verse from a poem written during this period indicates the faith and hope with which he endured his illness:

> Smiling my morn of life arose,
> Gay, guiltless pleasure led the hours;
> Sudden behold the prospect close,
> On all the cloud of sickness lowers;
> But from the skies a streaming light
> In brightness breaks above the sun;
> Rises gay Hope to meet the sight,
> And sorrow's sable night is gone:
> A smiling God my griefs to bear,
> To whom I owe that such things are.[10]

The year of rest proved so beneficial to Watson that he was able to resume his labors and was appointed by the Conference of 1810 to Manchester. Probably one of the most important events of the following year for Watson was the chance meeting between himself and Jabez Bunting while the two of them were returning from separate preaching appointments in Stockport one Sunday evening. The direct result of the meeting is further

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9 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 122-24.
10 Watson, op. cit., p. 95.

examined in the chapter on Watson's political activities. Without a doubt, the meeting also influenced the turn of events in Watson's life during the following year. Whatever else is said of their ride together on that May evening, it marked the beginning of the friendship between the two men who, more than any others, set the course of Methodism in their own day and even after. Between them they fashioned Methodism's administration, built and made secure her mission program, and systematized her theology. The effects of their joint efforts are alive to this day.

When the Conference met in the summer of 1811, Watson was again made the secretary and reappointed to Manchester. After a few months of the new year the bleeding in his lungs returned, making the performance of his duties impossible. In view of the persistence of his illness Watson resigned completely from his itinerant ministry in the New Connexion and moved to Liverpool where he established residence.

Was Watson's health his only reason for leaving the New Connexion? Although his infirmed state, which he perceived to have little hope of improving, was the immediate cause, there were obviously others involved. Bunting suggests two more reasons. In the first place, he affirms that Watson was moved by a "gradual and honest alteration" of his views on church government. In the second, Watson had a growing conviction, he believes, which was confirmed by his more judicious friends even in the New Connexion, that, should his health allow him to continue his public labors, he might find a wider range of service

among the Wesleyans.[11] Jackson confirms Bunting's first reason,[12] as does Rev. Robert Nicholson.[13] Nicholson, as a fellow minister of the New Connexion, lived in Watson's home during the year that the latter was a supernumerary. The two ministers found that they shared the same idea that the division by which the New Connexion had been founded had been unnecessary in view of the concessions of the Conference of 1797. Thus, Watson was mentally prepared to be willing to leave the New Connexion when his failing health presented the opportunity. As to Bunting's second reason, there is no evidence from Watson himself to confirm it; but subsequent events proved its validity.

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11 Bunting, op. cit., p. 72.
12 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 137-38.
13 Watson, op. cit., p. 97.

D. Second period with Wesleyan Methodists, 1812-1833.

1. Pastorate (Wakefield, Hull, London), 1812-1820.

When Watson retired from the itinerancy of the New Connexion, he returned to Liverpool where in time he became a member of the Wesleyan Methodist society. The years from 1801 through 1811 had been significant for him although their full importance might not have appeared to the still sick and humble man who attended the weekly class sessions with diligence. Through experience, his preaching powers had developed to the verge of maturity; through suffering, his own spiritual life had deepened, so that the pride, if it may be called such, because of which the young man had impetuously resigned from the Wesleyan Connexion had given way to patience and humility. Although he had sought in many quarters, he had failed to find the proper expression of his talents.

Watson's attitude upon being accepted into the fellowship of the Wesleyan society was marked by piety and conformity to rule. The Wesleyan Methodist ministers in Liverpool at the time were the Rev. Messrs. Entwisle, West, Gaulter, and Buckley. Entwisle, soon after Watson's admission into the society, prevailed upon him to preach at the Mount-Pleasant Chapel in Liverpool and was deeply impressed by the sermon and the service. As Watson's health continued to improve, Entwisle became persuaded "that his weight of talent and deep piety would render him an acquisition to the Connexion, and a bles-

sing to the world;"[1] and he, therefore, approached him on the matter of returning to the Wesleyan Conference. Since Entwisle's colleagues concurred in his judgement, after deliberation and prayer Watson agreed to their proposal.

That the enthusiasm on the part of the Liverpool ministers for Watson's re-admission was not unanimously shared became evident when, in the Local Preacher's Meeting, eight out of twenty-two voted against it.[2] Through the influence of Entwisle, Gaulter, Buckley, and Bunting, however, when his name was finally presented to the District Meeting, he was received with open arms. Likewise, the Conference which commenced on July 27th, 1812, in Leeds, welcomed him again into its fold. From all outward appearances the past was buried. In his more prominent days Watson was to discover, however, that there were those who were only too willing to disinter the past and to keep reminding him of it. Even at the time, the warmth of Watson's reception was chilled by questions in the hearts of some. Robert Newton is reported to have remarked to Bunting, "I am glad to find that Mr. Watson is sound in the faith; I hope his coming among us will be for the better and not for the worse."[3] One cannot help wondering if he remembered his words when on so many later occasions he, Bunting, and Watson sat on the same platform or preached from the same pulpit as the three foremost voices of Methodism.

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1 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, pp. 149-50.

2 T. P. Bunting, Life of Jabez Bunting, D. D., Vol. II, p. 12.

3 Ibid., pp. 16-17.

The Conference appointed Watson to Wakefield, which had recently been greatly disturbed by Luddite riots.[4] Brailsford says of Watson as he took up his new duties, "It was as if he had found himself and his true starting point at last."[5] The statement is only a partial truth. Watson had, indeed, finally arrived at his starting point, but he had not yet found himself. His life was truly given to God and to his ministry, but in the sense of the broad, shallow backwater of a dam. He had not yet found the channel by which his energies would be set racing on their course, both utilizing his latent powers and creating new power to serve God's purposes.

On November 27th, Watson suffered a personal loss in the death of his father. Because of his own delicate constitution he was unable to attend his dying parent but wrote to him on November 12th a letter which is permeated with his own faith. "For myself," he says, "afflictions have been good, very good for me; and I bless God for them. He corrects like a Father; and severe diseases require severe remedies. Happy for us if the divine Physician does not administer in vain . . . It is not death but grace, that must destroy our sins, and make us meet for heaven. Have faith in the promise of the Father to send the Holy Spirit in all the power he exerted in the day of Pentecost, to burn up the very root of corruption, and fill you in a moment with all the love and power of God, making you one with Christ, and an entirely new creature . . . By the same acts

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4 Maldwyn Edwards, After Wesley, pp. 29-30.

5 E. J. Brailsford, Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate, p. 48.

of praying faith expect perfect patience, peace, and love to be wrought in your mind, that you may come up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and spring up a mature Christian, saying, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.'"[6]

The Conference of 1813 re-appointed Watson to Wakefield under the superintendency of James Buckley. The year marks the turning point in Watson's life and ministry. On October 6th he preached in Leeds for the meeting which was to lead to the founding of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. For the details of the meeting, Watson's part in it, and the subsequent developments, one is referred to the chapter regarding Watson's work for missions. For its meaning to Watson's own personal history the significance of the event can hardly be over-estimated. It was as if God had at last opened the flood gates of Watson's soul, so that his spirit poured forth with a burst of power which did not subside until the turbulent stream was emptied into death's calm ocean. He had at last found himself; or perhaps one might more accurately say, he had found the task for which God had prepared him in talent and temperament, the task which demanded and received the best that was in him. Even Watson's noble efforts as a theologian must remain eclipsed by his creative contribution in the field of missions.

After the defeat of Bonaparte in the spring of 1814 a day of general Thanksgiving was appointed for July 7th. Watson preached for the joyous occasion, in both Wakefield and

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6 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 156-58.

Leeds, a sermon which is demonstrative of one of the characteristics of the man. When challenged by a particular occasion, Watson seems never to have failed to live up to the opportunity. In this instance, his sermon was of such excellence that he was requested to publish it. The Conference for the year removed him from Wakefield to Hull where a new chapel was being built in Waltham Street. There was apparently some dissension concerning the building, for Watson later said to Bunting that it was built "by the mutual instrumentality of the sword and the trowel."[7] On October 7th and 9th, however, the place of worship was opened by sermons from Watson, Bunting, Newton, and Burdsall.

The Conference of 1815 returned him to Hull where his ministry had been well attended and appreciated. His anonymous biographer observes of this period, "Almost every person in the town, who made any profession of religion, heard him at one time or another. Even his week night congregations in the principal chapels were unusually large; frequently amounting to 800 or 1000 people."[8] During his stay in Hull Watson's illness again plagued him but in a different manifestation. For years he had suffered with his lungs; but according to one of his colleagues of the period, William Naylor, that difficulty gave way to pains in his side of such severity that he was unable to ride his horse and often walked many miles on foot to fulfill his appointments even in the middle of winter.[9] Watson's personal courage and consecration to his calling never faltered under circum-

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7 Brailsford, op. cit., p. 51.
8 Compiled, Life of the Rev. Richard Watson, pp. 128-29.
9 Ibid., p. 129.

stances which would have caused many a strong man to cry out in despair and give up. The symptoms referred to by Naylor may indicate that the disease which eventually ended Watson's life had already begun to operate.[10]

Watson was requested to preach his first sermon in City Road Chapel, London, for the Annual Meeting of the London District Missionary Society in 1816. Stevens attributes his being appointed to the London East Circuit by the following Conference to the favorable impression made by the sermon.[11] The Conference also appointed him, along with George Marsden, as a secretary to the Missionary Society, an office which he held until his death. After Watson had taken up residence in London, near Wapping, he wrote a letter to a friend, Robert Garbutt, of Hull, which throws light on his daily schedule of activities for the period. "I have, for instance," he says, "to go regularly every day to the Mission office, in the City Road, about two miles from my house, and return to dinner. Then I have my evening walk to preach, sometimes two or three miles more. To this are to be added all the supernumerary walks which business or curiosity may call for. How much time I have for study and reading you may then guess: and indeed I have been obliged to turn the streets of London into a study; and sometimes fall into a reverie, at the hazard of being upset by a porter, or dashed on the pavement by some fiery charioteer."[12]

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10 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 621.

11 Abel Stevens, History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century Called Methodism, p. 201.

12 Jackson, op. cit., p. 234.

The Conference of 1817 returned Watson to the London East Circuit for a second year. Since his time was largely occupied with the mission activities and his writing, those subjects are treated in their respective chapters. The publication of his "Defence of the Missions in the West Indies" during this year is significant for his personal history in as much as it propelled him for the first time onto a stage where his voice was heard beyond the Methodist communion.

Early in the year 1818 Watson published his pamphlet on "The Eternal Sonship of Christ" in opposition to the views maintained by Dr. Adam Clarke on that subject. The work represents his first major attempt at theological composition, and the warmth with which it was received by his brethren may have helped determine his decision three years later to undertake the writing of a Wesleyan system of theology. It undoubtedly did establish him in the eyes of his contemporaries as among the front rank of Methodist divines. The Conference that summer transferred him from the London East to the London West Circuit and appointed him, in addition to his pastoral and mission duties, secretary to the newly instituted Fund for Embarrassed Chapels. Following Conference, he made his new residence in Margaret Street, Oxford Street. In a letter to a Mr. Ellis in Hull he voices his opinion of life in London, the city in which he was to live for all but two of the remaining years of his life. "If you ask me how I like London," he writes, "I can only say that, as a place, I had rather be elsewhere, surrounded by the works of God, rather than those of man; . . . but as the centre of every kind of intelligence, it has its interest. As a Methodist,

I know all that passes in the Connexion, as an Englishman, all that is transacted in the Empire, much sooner than I could know it elsewhere."[13]

Watson was returned to the London West Circuit by the Conference of 1819. He was also requested to write the first Address to the societies on behalf of the Conference. In the autumn the First Report of the General Chapel Fund, which he had written as secretary, was submitted to the public.

By 1820 the power of Watson's pen was generally acknowledged, so much so that he was entrusted with two important tasks by the Conference. In the first instance, he was requested to prepare a reply to the then recently published Life of Wesley by Robert Southey. The success and nature of his reply are discussed in later chapters. It should be pointed out, however, that the Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley marks the apex of his career as a controversialist and is the most sustained example of his best literary form. Secondly, he and Joseph Benson were asked to draw up a series of Catechisms to be submitted for examination to the next Conference,[14] but Benson was laid to rest in the following February. The plan for the Catechisms was apparently discarded for the time. Watson again wrote the Address to the societies. A brief feeling of the spirit of that Conference is offered by Entwisle as he says in his memoirs, "I felt unspeakable pleasure on that and many other occasions, in the perfect harmony and love between Dr. Clarke and Messrs. Moore, Bunting, Watson,

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13 Jackson, op. cit., p. 233.
14 Minutes of Methodist Conference, 1820.

Marsden, myself, and others, who from a sense of duty have written and spoken against the Doctor's views of the eternal Sonship. The love that prevails is delightful."[15] Watson was returned to the London West Circuit for another year.

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15 By His Son, Memoir of the Rev. Joseph Entwisle, pp. 294-5.

2. Resident Missionary Secretary, 1821-1826.

Since the years of this period of Watson's life were largely filled with his activities for missions and his writing, they are here presented only in outline form along with certain facts which are not disclosed elsewhere in this study.

The Conference of 1821 appointed Watson as a Resident Secretary of the mission work, which meant that for the first time he was relieved of his pastoral responsibilities and completely set apart for missions. At the request of the Conference he again wrote the Address to the societies. Following the death of Joseph Benson, Bunting was made editor of the book room and, therefore, the publication of the Magazine fell under his direction. He used his influence to persuade Watson to contribute more than had been his previous practice to the publication.[1] During the year Watson's mind turned to larger tasks for his mind and pen; for in the autumn he began working on his Theological Institutes, the first volume of which was printed some eighteen months later. It is interesting that in 1822 James Dixon wrote a letter to a Mr. Birley in which he said, "It is a shame that Watson does not employ his splendid talents in writing something worthy of himself; but I am afraid he is in that respect idle."[2] At that very time Watson was busily engaged on his

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1 T. P. Bunting, Life of Jabez Bunting, D.D., Vol. II, pp. 197-8.

2 Richard Watson Dixon, The Life of James Dixon, p. 104.

new project.

In 1823 Watson's outstanding contribution to the Magazine was a series of papers on the witness of the spirit. With regard to his religious thought, his delineation of the doctrine of the witness of the spirit remains, along with his ideas on reason and revelation, his contribution of most lasting significance. In February of this year Watson visited Brighton in the hope of receiving some benefit to his health, but throughout most of the year he remained a sick man. At the Conference that summer Watson became associated with a plan which, if he had lived, might have influenced his future ministry. He was named with John Gaulter, Jabez Bunting, and Thomas Jackson as a committee to report on a plan of instruction for preachers who were being admitted into the Conference on trial. The report was made and approved, but the plan was not yet found practicable.[3]

1824 was a difficult year for missions because of riots in Barbadoes. To add to Watson's personal difficulties he continued ill most of the year. Concerning his physical condition he remarked to a friend, "I know not what change is taking place in my constitution; but I am apprehensive that disease, in a somewhat new form, is beginning to develop itself. I believe that I am not naturally an ill-tempered man; at least my friends have not been in the habit of charging me with ill-nature; but of late I have found myself snappish, without being

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3 Abel Stevens, History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century Called Methodism, p. 350.

able to assign any particular reason for it. There is also another symptom which leads me to form this opinion concerning myself. Up to a late period my spirit has been sanguine and cheerful; my horizon has been generally bright and distinct; but latterly I have caught myself gloomy and beclouded, and yet I could not tell why."[4] Despite his infirmities, however, he continued his mission labors and found time to write and publish the second part of his Theological Institutes, A Catechism of the Evidences of Christianity, and a sermon of pamphlet length on The Religious Instruction of the Slaves in the West Indies.

During the spring of 1825, Watson was approached by his friends in Hull who requested that he return to his former Circuit; but he refused because of his health, saying, "It will always be a rule with me, not to undertake a Circuit in an invalid state."[5] The Conference, therefore, appointed him for the fifth year as a Resident Secretary of Missions. He continued his writing and traveling when health permitted. Among his products for the year were the Conference Address to the societies and part three of the Theological Institutes.

1826 was a memorable year for Watson; he had by then been fourteen years a minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion since his return. In those fourteen years he had found his fields of labor in missions and writing and had worked ceaselessly for the Connexion in spite of much pain and suffering. His name had come to be second to none as a preacher, theologian, and platform

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4 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, pp. 393-95.

5 Ibid., pp. 401-2.

orator. It was not surprising, then, that when the Conference began its meeting in Liverpool on July 26th, he was elected President in proof of the esteem of his fellow ministers. In speaking of the election and Watson's condition at the Conference, Jackson says, "The honour was conferred upon him with great unanimity, and with the most cordial affection. Everyone seemed to feel a thrill of gratification when he took possession of the chair, and delivered a short address, remarkable for its modesty and propriety. Through the whole Conference his mind appeared to be under a special divine influence; and his official conduct presented a remarkable admixture of Christian dignity and brotherly kindness."[6] On the following Sunday evening Watson preached in the Brunswick Chapel, with special reference to the twenty-four ministers who had died during the year, from the text, "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."[7]

Although Watson had the duties of the presidency to perform throughout the year, he retained his connexion with the mission work and published the fourth part of the Institutes. One is constantly amazed at the devotion to duty and consecration to his cause which urged Watson on when men less dedicated would have felt justified in curtailing their labors. In October following Conference he promised to speak for a Missionary Meeting in Leeds and kept his promise although greatly afflicted at the time. On Sunday he preached and on Monday he both preached

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6 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 435.
7 Daniel 12:13.

and spoke. His strength was then so far spent that he wrote his wife with the pen of a tired man, "I am greatly exhausted, and long for home."[8] Before he could go home, though, he had to fulfill a promise to preach for the opening of a new chapel in Salford. After he had preached as best he could, his will could no longer prevail over his body, and his strength failed. He was unable so much as to make the trip to London for some time. Had Watson never written a word, his indomitable faith and spirit would have recommended him for a place in the hall of those great men whose courage and devotion uplift and inspire all who visit with them for an hour.

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8 Watson, op. cit., p. 440.

3. Pastorate (Manchester, London), 1827-1831.

During this period of Watson's life he returned to the pastoral ministry after having been absent from it for seven years, six as a Resident Secretary of the Missionary Society and one as President of the Conference. His presidency, which began at the Conference of 1826, continued until the succeeding summer. His health seems to have improved somewhat with the coming of spring; and he traveled to Manchester to meet with a committee, consisting of himself, Bunting, Newton, and Marsden, which had been named by the preceding Conference to study ways of operating more efficient Sunday Schools. In May he and Bunting made a trip to Scotland, visiting chiefly the societies in Edinburgh and Glasgow. From there Watson journeyed to London and thence through Cornwall, to Dublin, and to Belfast for the Irish Conference. Upon leaving Belfast he went to Manchester for his own Conference. As the retiring President, he preached to the young men coming into full connexion from the text, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."[1] The sermon was later published. When the appointments for the year were named, Watson was assigned to replace Bunting on the Manchester third Circuit where his colleagues were John Hannah, Peter M'Owan, and William M. Bunting, the son of Jabez Bunting. In referring to the relationship between the

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1 II Timothy 1:7.

young Bunting and Watson during their labors together, the biographer of the former says, "Watson was in the very highest degree affectionate, familiar, and confidential; and to share such a man's daily life, to hear his most unreserved conversations about men and things, to live under the very shadow of what was nothing less than continual majesty of thought and bearing; to watch and study those small peculiarities by which true greatness betrays, rather than reveals itself; were most of themselves an education for the ministry."[2]

An event which took place during Watson's first year in Manchester throws an interesting light on the man and the times. When a musical festival and fancy-ball were advertised to be held in Manchester, some of the Methodists were "deceived" by the word "sacred" in regard to some of the music and purchased tickets for admission. As a spiritual watchman, Watson felt it his duty to warn his people that this was only a means of disguising sin under the cloak of religion. He thereupon preached on the matter, describing the spirits and habits of professional singers and performers in terms somewhat less than complimentary, saying, "And, forsooth, these men are pledged to mimic the sacrificial wailings of my blessed Lord; and to sound on catgut the groans which redeemed the world!"[3] Jackson concludes his narrative of the affair with the assurance that all but one or two belonging to the society chose to forfeit the money they had, through lack of understanding, paid rather than

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2 G. Stringer Rowe, Memorials of the Late Rev. William Bunting, pp. 17-18.

3 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, pp. 434-37.

sacrifice their religious consistency.

Although Watson's illness had abated during the spring of his presidency, the suffering struck him again with renewed vigor throughout the winter and spring of 1828. An unobtrusive incident took place at the anniversary of the Missionary Society held at City Road Chapel in London in May, which was to influence the future of his family. He preached at the Great Queen Street Chapel on Friday, May 2nd, and at City Road on Sunday the 4th. Both Jackson and the historian of the City Road Chapel record his pallid countenance and the signs of suffering which marked him on those occasions.[4] On Monday evening Watson was on the platform for the meeting but was too ill even to speak. James Dixon who did speak delivered an impressive eulogy on the sick man who had given his great heart and life to missions. Among those who were sitting in the gallery at the time was Watson's only daughter, Mary. Her mind had wandered momentarily from the business of the meeting when she was recalled by a friend tugging at her arm and pointing to the platform. Mary saw her father "bowed together and hiding his face between his hands, while the unknown speaker was pointing to him with one hand, the other hand flung out toward the audience, and, amid enthusiastic cheers, pouring forth one of the most passionate eulogiums that ever one man pronounced upon another."[5] The "unknown man" was to become her husband two years later.

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4 Jackson, op. cit., p. 437. also
G. I. Stevenson, City Road Chapel, London and Its Associations, p. 300.

5 Richard Watson Dixon, The Life of James Dixon, pp. 163-4.

When Conference met that summer, Watson was returned a second year to Manchester. The explosive interest of the meeting that year was the Leeds organ matter which is discussed in detail in Part III, Chapter 5B, in relation to Watson's part in it.

Throughout the autumn of 1828 and the spring of 1829 Watson's health continued its painful decline. In spite of this, however, he finished and corrected the final part of his Theological Institutes. On June 3rd he wrote to Mr. James Nichols, the publisher, "I am not, I assure you, elated with my Institutes as a whole; and I ought never to have begun them; but I hope they may lead to something better from some of our own writers in future years. They are at least adapted to the Methodist body, for which they were designed."[6] Upon its completion Watson presented the copy-right of the Institutes to the Book Room, for which gift he was voted the thanks of the Conference when it met.[7]

The question of Watson's appointment caused a debate on the floor of the Conference. He had engaged himself to go to Birmingham. Bunting thought he should be sent to City Road because of the declining state of the Circuit due to the Leeds organ affair. Since the question had to be settled, a vote was requested,[8] the first ever to be taken over a matter of stations. When the votes were counted, it was determined by one vote that

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6 Jackson, op. cit., p. 456.
7 The minutes of the Methodist Conference 1829, Question XVII relating to Book Affairs.
8 B. Gregory, Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism, p. 84.

he should go to City Road. The Conference also appointed a new committee, consisting of Watson, Jackson, Bunting, Hannah, and others, to draw up a plan for the instruction of young preachers. The committee continued to function until it produced the plan for the Wesleyan Theological Institution for the Conference of 1834.[9] Unfortunately, Watson, who would undoubtedly have been the first lecturer of the new Institution, did not live to see it established.

In the spring of 1830 Watson extended his influence as a writer by publishing his Conversations for the Young. At the Conference which was held in Leeds that summer he is characterized as having been the "master spirit,"[10] leading in the discussions, urging the body to take a more active stand against slavery than it had previously dared. He was reappointed to the London North Circuit. After Conference the Watson home must have been a place of happiness; for in August his only daughter, Mary, married James Dixon, his close friend in the ministry. Dixon had been married twice,[11] only to lose both wives by death, his second one being dead slightly over two years when he married Mary Watson. A description of the young lady shows the education Watson provided for his children, and the adjectives applied to her mind might well have been spoken of her father. She was "an excellent Greek and Latin scholar, a perfect French

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9 Abel Stevens, History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century Called Methodism, pp. 350-51.

10 Gregory, op. cit., p. 95.

11 R. W. Dixon, op. cit., p. 70. also p. 86.

and sufficient Italian linguist, and an exquisite musician. Her mind was equal to the elaborate education which she had received being capacious, generous, and ardent, intellectually very powerful, but also of the highest nervous excitability."[12] Following the death of Watson, his wife spent the remainder of her life in the home of the Dixons.[13] In the autumn Watson received an invitation from the American Methodists to fill the chair of Professor of Belles Lettres and Moral Philosophy in their newly established University, but he refused principally on the ground of his feeble constitution.[14]

An anecdote of Watson's City Road ministry throws light on the nature of the man, especially in relation to music in the public worship. John Benjamin Wylde, the sexton of City Road, was for many years the leader of the singing. He was sometimes rather fanciful with his selection of tunes, and it was of little concern to him whether the congregation could join with the choir or not. On one occasion when he had sung, with very little assistance from the congregation, the first stanza of a hymn, Watson, before reading the second stanza, said to him from the pulpit, "Brother Wylde, if you cannot give us good plain tunes, which the people can join in singing, we must have a leader who will do so." The reproof, one is told, sufficed to correct the gentleman's error in judgment.[15]

In 1831 Watson compiled a supplementary Hymn-Book for

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12 R. W. Dixon, op. cit., p. 169.
13 Stevenson, op. cit., p. 566.
14 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 469-71.
15 Stevenson, op. cit., p. 583.

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the societies. For some years he had intended to compile a Bible Dictionary and apply any profit from the work to his family in the event of his death. Toward this end he had gathered copious notes and material. The Book Room, unaware of his intentions, asked him to prepare such a work and doubtlessly were surprised at the speed with which the first part was published in October. The Conference returned him to the London North Circuit for another year. When in the autumn England was the scene of an outbreak of the dread Asiatic cholera, Watson held special services at City Road Chapel, as he did again when the disease reached London. During the autumn he was overcome more and more by his sickness, so that by the time for the watch-night service which was to close the year, he was so indisposed that he was obliged to remain in his own house until a few minutes before midnight. When he spoke to the people, it was with "deep seriousness and fervour, 'as a dying man to dying men.'"[16] That meeting was the last of its kind ever attended by him.

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16 Stevenson, op. cit., p. 200.

4. Resident Missionary Secretary, 1832-1833.

The last year of Watson's life was marked by continued activity of mind, as long as his feeble strength permitted. In a correspondence which passed between himself and James Montgomery in the Methodist Magazine[1] in the winter of 1831 and 1832 Watson demonstrated his knowledge of Wesleyan hymnology in claiming for Charles Wesley, after verifying them, certain hymns which were previously attributed to other composers or listed as anonymous. Some of the better known hymns he claimed for Wesley were: "Come, thou long expected Jesus," "Love divine, all loves excelling," and "Sinners, turn, why will ye die?"[2] "Rock of Ages cleft for me," he, however, in error attributed to Wesley rather than Toplady saying, "The truth is, that Toplady, notwithstanding his controversial bitterness, was so sensible to the excellence of Charles Wesley's hymns, as to insert many of them into his collection."[3]

As the spring progressed his condition of body degenerated to such a degree that he was induced to spend some time at Brighton in the hope of finding relief. Upon returning to London he began an exposition of the New Testament, despite his suffering and pain. Watson realized that his days of active service for God and His cause were rapidly drawing to a close; and prior to the Conference he presented to the Trustees a deed

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1 Wesleyan - Methodist Magazine, December, 1831, p. 839.
2 Ibid., February, 1832, p. 102.
3 Loc. cit.

to the copyright of all his literary works, except the Conversations for the Young, which he retained for the benefit of his family. For this "eminently liberal and disinterested conduct" he was voted the cordial thanks of the Conference.[4]

The Conference for the year was held in Liverpool although cholera was then alarmingly prevalent in the town. Watson attended, but his appearance "seriously affected his friends. His strength was nearly reduced; his countenance was unusually pale and wan; he was in almost constant pain; but his spirit was remarkably pious and cheerful."[5] During the assembly he stayed with his friends of many years, the Kayes. Although weak, he preached one Sunday at the Brunswick Chapel. After having been out of the office for five years, he was again appointed a Resident Secretary of Missions.

When Watson began his familiar duties at the Mission office, he was a worn-out man; but he continued to labor. On October 28th he preached for the Hinde-street Chapel in behalf of the Wesleyan Schools at Kingswood and Woodhouse-Grove. At the close of the service he left the pulpit for the last time. The candle was burning low, but in his determination to serve to the end he used each fading flicker. His spirit shines through this letter dated October 23rd:

> I am an invalid, just able to do the in-door work of this office; but my strength is gone. My voice is cracked, by a complaint of the larynx, and my health is very uncertain. I have therefore declined all engagements from home; and those which I have

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4 Minutes of Methodist Conference, 1832.

5 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, pp. 489-490.

> upon the plans in London, through sudden attacks, I frequently do not fulfill. This is my trial. May I have grace to submit to it with cheerfulness, and be purified in the fire! I must now pass away from the more active scenes of the church, and from the public eye; and I submit, praying that those who are spared to work in the vineyard may have great success. For myself, I shall be glad to do a little behind the scenes while I am spared; but that is all I can look for, according to the aspect of my present circumstances.[6]

Watson knew that what he had left to do had to be done quickly. When he realized that he would be unable to finish his exposition of the New Testament, he had reached the 12th chapter of Luke. Hoping to at least complete the parts he held to be of special importance, he left Luke, skipped John and Acts, and began work on Romans. When he concluded his notes on verses 22 and 23 of the third chapter, the pen fell from the hand which had contributed so much to Methodism.

In December he was confined to his bed. The pains which had tormented him intermittently racked his body, each time leaving him exhausted and sapping the little remaining strength with which he met them. Jackson records Watson's spiritual preparation as he knew death to be approaching; he records too, the accounts of those who visited him. Watson relinquished all hope after an excruciating attack in the night and early morning of December 24th. On Christmas day he suffered comparatively little, but the following day he handed his work and papers over to his colleague in the Missionary Secretaryship. His daughter and her husband, James Dixon, seldom left his bed-

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6 Jackson, op. cit., p. 500.

side in the final sickness. He was calm in mind and spirit until a few days before the end he sank into a state of lethargy. Dixon says of those last days that he appeared "almost insensible to those around him, and was nearly incapable of the use of speech. . . At intervals he seemed to be engaged in devotional exercises. At length, after many hours of difficult respiration, the moment of dissolution approached; and, without any apparent pain, or convulsive struggle, his sanctified and happy spirit left its tabernacle of clay, and entered the world of rest and love."[7] He died at ten minutes past eight o'clock on Tuesday evening, January 8, 1833, in the fifty-second year of his life and the thirty-seventh of his ministry.

His funeral took place at City Road Chapel on the following Tuesday, January 15th, and was conducted by Joseph Entwisle, George Marsden, and Edward Oakes. On Friday, January 18th, at the request of the family, Bunting preached in City Road for the death of his friend. Watson is buried but a few feet from John Wesley in the plot behind City Road Chapel. On his tomb stone are these words:

> Sacred to the memory of the Rev. Richard Watson, who died in the Lord January 8th, 1833, in the 52nd year of his age. A man not more distinguished for the admirable endowments of his mind, than for the depth of his piety, the fervour of his zeal, and the consecration of his powerful genius to the service of God in His sanctuary, and the spiritual interest of mankind; an amiable expounder of the oracles of God, an eloquent, argumentative, and impressive preacher of the gospel, an affectionate pastor of the flock which Christ hath purchased with His own

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7 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 617.

> blood, a profound theological writer, a successful advocate of missions to the heathen. As one who walked humbly with God, his name will be long and gratefully associated with the principal writers and ornaments of the Christian Church. "Unto the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, forever and ever. Amen."

The Conference of 1833 was a somber time for Methodists. During the course of the preceding year they had lost no less than thirty ministers by death, among whom were two of their brightest lights, Richard Watson and Adam Clarke. In recognition of their services the Conference voted a resolution that Tablets (similar to those already there in memory of the Wesleys, Fletcher, and Coke) should be erected in City Road Chapel commemorating their memory along with that of Joseph Benson. In accordance with the resolution a memorial was erected to Watson against the wall, to the right of and behind the pulpit in the Chapel, upon which is the following inscription:

Sacred to the Memory of
RICHARD WATSON.
Born 1781; died 1833.
In him were united unbounded power of imagination,
A pure and correct taste,
A sound and discriminating judgment,
A forcible and graceful elocution, great dignity, and simplicity
of manner, and a spirit eminently generous.
He preached the Gospel of the grace of God with an ability
seldom equalled,
Adorned it by a holy and upright life,
And illustrated and defended its vital principles
in several invaluable publications.

Thus Richard Watson lived, a servant of God; and thus he died, a child of his Lord. His is a unique place among the Methodists of the generation following Wesley. Although there were those of his brethren who equalled his powers in one field of endeavor or another, he eclipsed them all by the all-rounded

quality of his life and ability in every labor he attempted.

E. Watson the Man.

Neither in examining a man's work nor in exploring his thought does one discover a complete picture of the individual although these two factors constitute the predominant expressions of his character and personality. In order that these factors be understood and assessed in the light of the total person, one might first ask some questions. What sort of man was Richard Watson? What were his interests beyond those about which he wrote? What were the qualities which made up his personality? What impression did he leave on those who knew him? This section is an attempt to answer some of these questions and to re-create, as it were, a picture of Richard Watson, the man.

As it has already been observed, by the time Watson was fourteen years old he had reached his mature height of six feet two inches. Although in the adolescent the extra inches were manipulated with no small degree of awkwardness, in the man the tall, slender frame only accented his graceful and dignified carriage. As to his facial features, they are best described by James Dixon in a passage which is too rich in its own rights as a piece of descriptive interpretation to be abridged. Despite its length, therefore, it is included:

> The face was elongated, and somewhat pale, with an appearance of constant suffering, and often overshadowed with a tinge of melancholy. The mouth was expressive of everything but obstinacy. The sense of the ridiculous, satire, scorn, contempt, defiance, imagination, love, joy, all

> found expression in those wonderful lips. The nose was prominent, not exactly Grecian, not exactly Roman, but beautifully English, and expressive of both genius and generosity. The eyes were dark, oval, deep, brilliant, piercing, and, if we may say so, inexpressively expressive. His look of scrutiny pierced to the bottom of the soul; his look of complacency inspired instant confidence; his look of affection kindled the feelings into a hearty glow; his look of devotion was calmly meditative; his look of inspiration was like a blaze of sacred fire. No one could possibly mistake the meaning of his eyes; they spoke as intelligently as his tongue. But that brow! We know not what to say; we are afraid of failure on the one hand, and of being accused, by those who did not live in his day, of exaggeration. But we believe that in this case exaggeration is impossible. . . We have seen heads of greater breadth than that of Mr. Watson, indicating greater power in some of its forms. . . But the brow was prodigiously developed, as if by some extraordinary process the whole substance of the brain had been forced to this point - as if the intellectual had demanded and engrossed every particle. The forehead did not taper inward from the sides, but was square; neither was it retiring, as we often see in heads otherwise fine, but was as nearly perpendicular from the eyebrows as possible, and of great height. Taken in connexion with the face, there was real sublimity in the loftiness of this brow.[1]

Apparently Watson's brow was the most outstanding feature of his countenance, for Gregory also notes it as the biggest brow he had ever seen, "exquisitely modelled" as by a master workman's hand.[2] Jackson, likewise, refers to it as "remarkably lofty, broad, somewhat arched, and altogether formed with consummate beauty."[3]

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1 William Willan, Sermons and Outlines by the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 134.

2 B. Gregory, Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism, p. 50.

3 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 543.

What were some of the interests, besides theology and his work, of this man of the large brow? Watson seems to have been affectionately devoted to his family, to Mrs. Watson who was ill like himself for extended periods and to the children, Tom and Mary. Watson, for instance, held such a deep concern for the education of the children that he did not entrust it to a paid teacher. For years he devoted two hours a day to their instruction; and when more time could be obtained from his official duties, it was appropriated to them.[4] Watson's own interests were exceptionally broad. He had a love of poetic literature with a preference for Milton as a writer.[5] Although he never made a systematic study of the art of poetry, the testimony of his contemporaries is that he had great ability in fusing his own well-developed poetic imagination into his sermons. He was also an ardent admirer of art. Jackson affirms that he was usually an early visitor of the Annual Exhibition at Somerset-house by the Royal Academy.[6] His interest in the sciences, particularly astronomy and botany, was equally keen, so much so that he generally carried with him a magnifying glass with which to examine flowers and other small objects. He was even known at times to carry a lancet with which to dissect the objects of his interest.[7]

What was the man himself like? The first quality of Watson to impress itself upon one was his humility and modesty.

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4 Jackson, op. cit., p. 564.
5 E. J. Brailsford, Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate. pp. 116-17.
6 Jackson, op. cit., p. 549.
7 Ibid., p. 395.

Just as pride is the most subtle sin, humility is the most difficultly maintained virtue, particularly for a minister; for no sooner does one achieve a measure of humility than he realizes it and in the realization becomes proud of the victory and stumbles. Watson might well have been inclined to be proud after struggling with suffering, set-backs, and adversity until he became one of the most lauded and respected figures of the Methodist ministry; but through it all his spirit remained humble. The historian of City Road Chapel says that his humility actually never shone brighter than in the days of his greatest popularity.[8] He was never a man to boast. Dixon affirms that even his best friends never heard him utter words of self-approval but often heard the language of self-reproach from him.[9] His modesty further expressed itself in the absence of dogmatism from his conversation and in the just deference he paid to the opinions of others.[10] Because of this quality he always remained sensitive to the kindnesses of others toward him. Brailsford flatly states that his humility was "the most undeniable hallmark of his genius and his grace."[11]

Although those who knew Watson best found in him only a warm nature and condescending spirit, there was a side to his character which left an impression of austerity, reserve, and even superciliousness. In the opinion of the author of an essay on Watson:

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8 G. J. Stevenson, City Road Chapel, London, and Its Associations, p. 565.

9 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," p. 38, quoted from James Dixon.

10 Jackson, op. cit., p. 568.

11 Brailsford, op. cit., p. 121.

> If by those who have the honour of a nearer acquaintance he is justly said to be affable and condescending, we can only say that, according to our judgement, the virtue is in his case doubly virtuous, as having been acquired by hard earned victory over an opposite propensity; and we most cordially congratulate him on a triumph which adds so great a lustre to his character.[12]

On the basis of Watson's actions in retiring from the Hinckley Circuit the view expressed above is not entirely without grounds. Another writer who knew Watson only slightly, appears to have been referring to this same characteristic when he admitted that he thought of the man as "like a star that dwelt apart," "one inspiring more of reverence than affection."[13] Even as great an admirer as Dixon confessed that Watson's individualism bore a peculiar stamp in as much as his faculties sometimes seemed to move in a sphere into which none entered.[14] It is not difficult to understand how one who so completely lost himself in concentration that he might not recognize his best friends on the streets of London could be regarded by many as reserved or aloof. It is also possible that through years of training in hiding pain and suffering from others Watson easily lowered the curtain between himself and the world on other occasions.

Watson's gregarious nature, as opposed to his reserve, expressed itself in his fondness for conversation. His early pleasure in posing a question and then eliciting the views of

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12 Willan, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
13 John Stoughton, Religion in England from 1800 to 1850, Vol. I. p. 315.
14 Willan, op. cit., p. 61.

others, which with his propensity for argument helped cause his difficulties in Hinckley,[15] remained with him throughout life. In general his conversation was grave and calculated to edify, but in such a way that his presence in a fireside circle was a coveted favor. His mind and spirit revealed themselves in his conversation in such a way that William Bunting could say, "It was scarcely possible to hear him preach, or converse regularly, without acknowledging the presence and charm of a highly intellectual, poetical, and sanctified mind."[16] He was not always somber, however; and, although he strongly disapproved of flippancy, he had his lighter moments when he would tell and enjoy a story as well as any minister.[17]

Although Watson was rarely known to laugh aloud,[18] he possessed a sharp wit and a sense of humour which expressed itself most often in satire both from his tongue and pen.[19] Prime examples of the latter are to be found in his Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley. A glimpse of an even more playful side of his humor is afforded by the following excerpts from some verse he wrote, upon the completion of his History of the Reign of George III, to his friend and publisher, Mr. Kaye, of Liverpool:

> No longer haunted by your devil,
> Though late in dumps, I'm now grown civil;
> And though I boast a patriot's merit,

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15 Bunting, op. cit., p. 85. Quotes letter from Mrs. Bulmer, London, Jan. 16, 1833.

16 Ibid., pp. 35-36. Quote from W. M. Bunting.

17 Crailsford, op. cit., p. 118.

18 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 570-71.

19 Ibid., p. 563.

Nor ranc'rous hate of kings inherit,
With warmest loyalty attended,
I'm glad the reign of George is ended.
. . . .
Yes; George's reign is fully ended,
And, sent to press, can't now be mended.
The books of ref'rence sent by you,
Affording news both old and new,
Are in brown paper closely penn'd in,
And you may have them for the sending.[20]

No one quality of Watson's aroused more words of high acclaim than did his intellectual powers.[21] For a lad whose formal education ceased in his fourteenth year and who as a man lived a busy and active life, his attainments as a scholar are impressive. Besides being well versed in French, Latin, and Greek, he had a degree of proficiency in Hebrew and Italian; he had also applied his mind to studies of the natural sciences, logic, metaphysics, and the principles of government. In short he had a passion for truth wherever he might find it,[22] and in the search his mind was never idle. At every moment of mental leisure he had the habit of directing his thoughts to his present subject of investigation,[23] whether it were the extent of the operation of God's love or the component parts of a flower. The assimilating power of his mind, in the opinion of Rev. John Scott, was its distinguishing excellence.[24] That which he learned he seldom forgot,[25] nor was newly acquired knowledge left lying around idly to clutter his memory. That which he gained, he di-

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20 Richard Watson, Works, Vol, I. p. 80.
21 Compiled, Life of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 288. and Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, February, 1833, p. 148.
22 Bunting, op. cit., p. 26.
23 Ibid., p. 31.
24 Ibid., p. 77, quoting letter from Rev. John Scott, Manchester, Jan. 15, 1833.
25 Jackson, op. cit., PP. 546-47.

gested and used in what he considered to be its proper way in the scheme of things, to prove, enlarge, or illustrate some great truth. For this reason Bunting is not wrong when he says that Watson took more pleasure in synthesis than analysis and "was glad to make his escape, as soon as he properly could, from details to great principles."[26] With regard to this synthesizing quality of Watson's thought, Brailsford justly says, "If he did not create, he developed. If he did not make the laws, he codified and interpreted them. If he did not explore, he laid out and fenced the territory."[27]

In their day Richard Watson and Adam Clarke were regarded as the two eminent scholars of Methodism. It is interesting to note that Stoughton, in comparing their relative merits says, "Richard Watson had not the learning of Adam Clarke, but intellectually he was far superior."[28]

Perhaps few men knew Watson better than did Jabez Bunting, to whom Watson dedicated his Institutes, and Thomas Jackson, his biographer and friend of many years. Both of the men agree in attributing to Watson a decidedly spiritual mind and a deep piety, which Jackson calls the crowning excellence of his character.[29] They likewise agree that his spirituality was neither mystical nor mere trite conventional manifestations of piosity;[30] it was scriptural and practical, the effect of his

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26 Bunting, op. cit., pp. 25-26.
27 Brailsford, op. cit., p. 127.
28 Stoughton, op. cit., p. 326.
29 Watson, op. cit., p. 668.
30 Bunting, op. cit., p. 35.

religious principles. Furthermore, Bunting observes that his piety was progressive, so that its maturity and vigor in his later years were especially conspicuous and edifying. One of the expressions of this was his conscientiousness in the use of time.[31] An example of the impression made by his spiritual-mindedness on a younger man is seen in these words of William Bunting with regard to the domestic devotions during the two years he lived in the Watson household:

> So absorbed did he frequently seem to be in contemplation and mental inquiry, so awake to the charm or value of every paragraph, every sentence, and so anxious to retain the impression, that he would pause many times in the course of reading, sometimes as if unconscious of the presence of the family, and occasionally comment on anything that struck him.[32]

This was Watson the man, an unforgettable individual, one of whom Jonathan Edmondson said, "When shall we see his like again?"[33] While reminiscing about Watson, T. P. Bunting, the son of Jabez, wrote:

> There are survivors who still, in not unfrequent dreams, see him, in the pulpit, or walking in the streets, or stretching his long limbs, half sitting and half recumbent, in his chair by the fire-side; and, when they wake, it is to reflect that, if his short but splendid career has found no parallel, perhaps none has been needed; and to pray that the gifts still continued to the Church may be improved as his were, and consecrated with his simplicity and intensity of purpose to the honour of the Saviour and to the welfare of mankind.[34]

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31 Bunting, op. cit., p. 34.
Ibid., p. 36.
32 Ibid., p. 26.
33 Thomas Jackson, Recollections of My Own Life and Times, p. 267.
34 T. P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, D. D., Vol. 1, p. 380.

F. Methodism of Watson's day.

What was the state and progress of Methodism during the life and ministry of Watson? When Warburton published his Doctrine of Grace against the Methodists in 1762, one of his friends and colleagues[1] thought it was "the singular merit of this discourse that it will be read when the sect that gave occasion to it is forgotten; or rather, the sect will find in it a sort of immortality."[2] The statement must stand high on any list of unfulfilled predictions; for not only was Methodism remembered but also it grew and spread in a phenomenal way even after it was deprived of the guidance of its founder.

At the time of John Wesley's death in 1791, there were about 80,000 people attached to the societies in connexion with him.[3] Methodism was then slightly over fifty years old. During the next sixty years the movement spread far more rapidly than it had even in Wesley's lifetime, so that by 1850 the societies had a total membership in Britain alone of 358,277 an increase of about 260,000.[4] Of equal significance with its increase in members was Methodism's increase in influence through its spirit being "infused into older Nonconformist sects."[5]

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1 Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, 1781-1808.

2 J. H. Overton and Frederick Relton, The English Church from the Accession of George I to the End of the Eighteenth Century, p. 170.

3 Robert F. Wearmouth, Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England, 1800-1850, p. 1.

4 Ibid., p. 3.

5 G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, p. 494.

Methodism left its imprint on almost every phase of British life, morals, and politics during the life span of Watson.

The purpose of this brief section is not to recapitulate recent research concerning Methodism's mutual relationship with the factors of the social scene. It is, rather, to view the currents which were flowing within the Methodist body.

Methodism in the period covering Watson's ministry (1796-1832) moved forward with tremendous vitality. Perhaps its very vitality was one of the sources of its difficulties, for as one writer says, "The stream was too turbulent to remain within banks."[6] Between 1796 and 1832 Methodism was rent by four divisions: The formation of the Methodist New Connexion in 1797, the Primitive Methodists in 1807, the Bible Christians in 1815, and the Protestant Methodists in 1827.

Alexander Kilham, the first major dissentient among the Methodists following the death of Wesley, was born on July 10, 1762, in John Wesley's birthplace of Epworth. In Kilham's twentieth year he was converted in a Methodist revival and shortly thereafter began traveling as an assistant to R. C. Brackenbury, as Bradford had traveled with Wesley.[7] He was eventually appointed by Wesley as an itinerant and finally ordained in 1792. Kilham was of the opinion that the Methodist societies should claim their complete liberty from the Church of England, which, of course, was impossible as long as Wesley was alive and

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6 A. W. Harrison, B. A. Barber, G. G. Hornby, and E. T. Davies, The Methodist Church, Its Origin, Divisions, and Reunion, p. 54.

7 W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, G. Eayers, A New History of Methodism, Vol. I, p. 490.

committed to maintaining the relation with the Establishment. Kilham also believed that the government of Methodism after the death of Wesley should be more in the hands of the laity, or at least shared by them. To the end of achieving the changes he thought necessary, he employed his pen. Although the Plan of Pacification adopted by the Conference of 1795 made concessions which satisfied most of the members who were of a similar mind with Kilham, he refused to be pacified and continued his agitation. He was called to answer for his views before the Conference of 1796; and when his answers were unacceptable, he was expelled.

The question was still not entirely closed. At the Conference of 1797 further changes were made in the Plan of Pacification. When it became obvious that the Conference was going no further in its concessions, three ministers, William Thom, Stephen Everfield, and Alexander Cummin, who thought as Kilham, resigned from the parent body and with Kilham formed the "New Itinerancy," the Methodist New Connexion.[8] The four distinctive tenets of the new body were: 1. the right of the people to hold their worship services at the most convenient hours without being restricted to the intervals between worship in the Established Church, 2. the right of the people to receive Baptism and the Lord's Supper from the hands of their own ministers and in their own places of worship, 3. the right of the people to a representation in the district meetings and in the

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8 Townsend, Workman, Eayers, op. cit., p. 495.

annual Conference, 4. the right of the society to have a voice through its business meetings in the reception and expulsion of members, the choice of local officers, and the calling of candidates for the ministry.[9]

The New Connexion, which was begun at the close of Watson's first year as a traveling preacher was to be his ministerial home for almost ten years. Did Watson, therefore, share the views of Alexander Kilham? There is evidence for believing Watson not to have been influenced by questions of ecclesiastical polity in his entrance into the New Connexion. Many years later he admitted to Thomas Jackson in a letter, "In the early days of my ministry I never read five pages of the Kilham controversy; being in obscure Circuits and studying something better."[10] The matter of principles might, however, have had something to do with his leaving the New Connexion in 1811.

For as much as one learns from Watson, the next two separations from the Wesleyan Methodist body might just as well not have happened. He makes no mention of them and was in no discernible way affected by them. The forces which led to the formation of the Primitive Methodists first expressed themselves in 1807. Hugh Bourne and William Clowes lived in Staffordshire at the beginning of the century. They were both converted and became ardent laborers for Methodism. In April of 1807 the two men heard Lorenzo Dow speak of the usefulness

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9 John Staughton, Religion in England from 1800 to 1850, p. 335 ff. Quoted from Jubilee Volume of New Connexion p. 56.

10 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 481.

of Camp Meetings which had been held in America since 1799. They decided to attempt such an enterprise; and on May 31, the first Camp Meeting was held at Mow Cop, or Congleton Edge, an elevation separating Staffordshire and Cheshire. The success of the undertaking led to a second one being held on July 19. When the Conference met in August, it passed judgment on the issue by declaring, "It is our judgment that, even supposing such meetings to be allowable in America, they are highly improper in England, and likely to be productive of considerable mischief, and we disclaim connection with them."[11] The ruling by the Conference diminished the movement's supporters but did not dampen the spirits of Bourne and Clowes. A decisive Camp Meeting was held immediately following Conference at Norton-on-the-Moors. As a result of his continued activities, Bourne was expelled in 1808, followed by Clowes two years later. Finally in March, 1810, the Primitive Methodists began to meet as a distinct community.[12] One cannot help believing that John Wesley would have found some way of harnessing the revivalistic fervor of these two men for the parent body rather than force them out. During the years when these events were transpiring, Watson was a member of the New Connexion and was not influenced or even touched by them.

The Bible Christians arose as the result of the work of William O'Bryan. He was from Methodist parents although his

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11 A. Stevens, History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century Called Methodism, p. 168. Quoting Methodist Magazine, 1807, p. 432.

12 Townsend, Workman, Eayers, op. cit., p. 569.

grandfather was a Quaker. After his spiritual awakening in 1795 he assisted the Methodist preachers in their work. By 1809 he was preaching and establishing classes in areas where neither Methodists nor Dissenters were working, such as at Mawgan. The first blow came to O'Bryan when in 1810 the Cornwall Wesleyan Methodist District Meeting refused to accept him as an itinerant because he had a family, even though he offered guarantees for its support.[13] Since he persisted in his irregular ministry, he was expelled from his society. Four years later he was induced to rejoin, and the societies he had formed in the interim were connected to the Methodist Circuits. O'Bryan was not one to be idle when there was work to be done, however; and before the year was out he was on a missionary tour in North Devon. Because he had been absent from his class for three weeks, he was again expelled.

The Bible Christians actually date their beginning from a class meeting which was held at the request of the Thorne family at Lake Farm, Shebbear, on October 9, 1815.[14] O'Bryan had been asked to come and meet with the twenty-two members. The first Quarterly Meeting was held on January 1, 1816, and reported 237 members, which number increased to 1,112 in the following fifteen months.[15] The doctrine preached by the group was essentially that of Methodism, but women were allowed on an equal basis with men as preachers. In spite of the good work done by O'Bryan, he seemed convinced that rules were made for

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13 Townsend, Workman, Eayers, op. cit., p. 505.
14 Ibid., p. 507.
15 Ibid., p. 508.

other people. When his insistence that his vote should be the final and deciding one in Conference was refused, he resigned in 1829 from the body he had founded and left for New York.[16]

Since the details of the events leading to the formation of the Protestant Methodists in 1827 are discussed in a later section of this study,[17] it will suffice at this point to say that it resulted from a dispute regarding the erection of an organ in the Brunswick Chapel in Leeds, although the issues involved were more far reaching than simply whether or not the Chapel should have had an organ. The first meeting of the Protestant Methodists was held in the Ebenezer Methodist New Connexion Chapel in Leeds in 1827.[18]

Since, in the case of the formation of the New Connexion, the relationship between Methodism and the Church of England was one of the causes of separation, one might further ask, "What was the state of that relationship during the period of Watson's ministry?" Watson's ministry spanned a developmental period in that relationship. John Wesley lived, labored, and died as a clergyman of the Church of England. His work may be regarded as the foundation of both the Methodist revival of the eighteenth century and the rise of evangelical religion within the Established Church of that century. As a matter of fact, Overton and Relton name Wesley as a member of the evangelical movement within the Church,[19] in which category Wesley would probably have included himself. It is not an exaggeration, however,

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16 Townsend, Workman, Eayers, op. cit., p. 512.
17 See Part III, Chapter 5,B.
18 Townsend, Workman, Eayers, op. cit., p. 515.
19 Overton and Relton, op. cit., pp. 248-49.

to say that it was Wesley's life and work which ignited the evangelical movement which gave rise to "the strongest type of English gentleman in the new era, whether Whig or Tory."[20]

Wesley always regarded the Methodist societies as belonging to the Church of England. Despite his professions to the contrary, however, his actions tended to prepare the societies for a complete separation from the parent body. If Methodism had been united in its opinion as to the future course the societies should take, there might have been no difficulty. As it was, there were three latent parties in the societies which made themselves felt following the death of Wesley. Many of the Methodists were Churchmen first and Methodists second. To many others the Church of England meant little or nothing; they had been converted through the instrumentality of Methodist preachers and spiritually reared in the atmosphere of the class meeting. Any attachment they had for the Church was out of deference to Wesley.[21] The third group simply wanted the Conference to take the place of Wesley and thus allow the societies to continue in a somewhat ambiguous relationship to the Established Church.[22]

The death of Wesley precipitated a crisis. In the following Conferences an attempt was made to reach a position which pleased all factions. The result was the general agreement on the Plan of Pacification in 1795, according to which

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20 G. M. Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century, p. 54.

21 Harrison, Barber, Hornby, and Davies, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

22 Townsend, Workman, Eayers, op. cit., p. 488.

Methodism became separated from the Church of England and established its rights to its own ministry and ordinances, but also according to which each society was given the responsibility of deciding whether or not the sacraments would be observed in its chapel and whether or not its hours of worship would coincide with those of the Established Church. It is interesting that as late as 1870 some Methodist chapels still did not hold services during church hours.[23] Although the complete separation took a number of years, most of it occurred during Watson's ministry.

One can feel the Methodists' change of attitude toward their own status from 1791 to 1830. When the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1804, its committee consisted of thirty-six laymen, fifteen of which were nonconformists. Lord Teignmouth proposed that the nonconformists should add other names of their brethren to the committee. The Wesleyans declined on the grounds that they considered themselves adequately represented by the bishops in places of leadership in the organization.[24] In 1820 Watson could still write to Southey:

> To leave the communion is not, in any sense, a condition of membership with us. All the services of the Church and her sacraments may be observed by any person in our societies who choose it, and by many are so.[25]

As an indication of the separation, this further statement of Watson's is interesting:

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23 Townsend, Workman, Eayers, op. cit., p. 386.
24 F. W. Cornish, The English Church in the 19th Century, Part I, p. 39.
25 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. V, p. 458.

> In another respect, also, Methodism answers an important purpose. It forms a middle body between the Establishment and the Dissenters, and affords the means of religious assistance to many who fully approve of the ecclesiastical polity neither of the one nor the other. Mr. Southey, with all his exceptions to Methodism, thinks that an advantage would be gained by formally attaching us in some way to the Church. This is no proof of his acquaintance with the subject on which he writes. The time in which such a recognition of Methodism was most practicable has long since passed away. Perhaps it would never have answered any important end; but certainly it is now neither possible nor desirable.[26]

Not until 1826, however, was a Methodist preacher allowed to administer the sacraments in City Road Chapel.[27] Whereas the principle of separation had been stated when Watson began his ministry in 1796, the idea was slowly accommodated to the actions of the body throughout the following forty and more years.

The days during which Watson lived were politically turbulent, spanning the period from before the French Revolution to the abolition of slavery, including an almost constant strain from economic distress and industrial unrest. The Methodist position on political matters was determined by two factors: the dominant Tory attitude of its leaders, which had been inherited from Wesley, and the more liberal tendencies of its doctrines and practices. Only by bearing both facets constantly in mind can one understand Methodism's role in the politics of the period. One facet is seen in its blindness to the abuses of the constitution, exemplified in Adam Clarke's statement, "The Constitution is good: it can scarcely be mended. It is

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26 Watson, Works, Vol. V, p. 473.
27 Townsend, Workman, Eayerson. cit., p. 439. Quoting Telford, Wesley Chapel, p. 46.

the best under the sun."[28] The other facet expressed itself in such a way that Wearmouth's more recent verdict is, "As a religious democracy practically the whole of its technique was taken over by the political societies."[29]

Watson lived through a period of trial and transition for Methodism. His contemporaries included, on the one hand, Thomas Coke, Adam Clarke, Joseph Benson, and a host of other men who had been Methodist preachers with Wesley. On the other hand, he was also the contemporary of Jabez Bunting, Robert Newton, James Dixon, and others who helped fashion Methodism as it was to be. He himself was one of the strong voices who determined the course Methodism should take. It is the purpose of the next part of this study to examine the areas of endeavor in which Watson's labors were most productive.

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28 Maldwyn Edwards, After Wesley, p. 28.
29 Wearmouth, op. cit., p. 174.

PART II

WORK

CHAPTER I

PREACHER AND MINISTER

A. Watson at his work

The primary goal of a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to do the will of God in the task assigned to him, namely, the preaching of the Word and the care of God's children with all the duties implied in those functions. Richard Watson was known in his own day as one of the foremost ministers among the Wesleyan Methodists. For thirty-six years he labored for Christ and produced results for His cause. He was appreciated by those both within and without his own communion. If time could be turned backward and one might revisit the England of 1830, then this question might be proposed to any one of the Wesleyan Methodist societies, "Which minister in the connexion has done the most to further the cause of Christ in his generation?" Doubtless, a number of replies would be offered; outstanding names such as Jabez Bunting, Adam Clarke, Robert Newton, Joseph Benson would be mentioned. One is safe, however, in saying that no such list would fail to include Richard Watson near its head. Although generations pass, great names fade, and styles in preaching change, the truths of Christ's gospel and the beauty of a life dedicated to that gospel remain the same. Watson was so dedicated, and his life is to be viewed in the light of his labor as a minister.

In an attempt to understand him in this respect, the chapter is divided into two main sections: the first deals with the man in the midst of his work, in the pulpit, in the study, in the pastoral ministry; the second, with an evaluation of his work.

A. Watson at his work.

If Watson attained any prominence as a minister, if any success attended his efforts for Christ, he himself would have been the first to deny that the fruit was due to his own merit or powers. Christ, he would have acknowledged humbly, was the power behind his ministry. In speaking of this he said to Southey:

> No great and indisputable results of this kind have been produced except by men who have acknowledged . . . .that promised co-operation contained in the words, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."[1]

His manner was such that the attitude was perceptible on the part of his congregations. Even five years after his death, a writer for the Methodist Magazine remembered that "he appeared in the pulpit as though he had to do the work of God in the presence of God."[2]

One can imagine himself sitting in a pew at City Road Chapel in London on a Sunday morning in the spring of 1830. A quiet, expectant atmosphere prevails throughout the congregation. At the appointed hour Richard Watson walks in and strides to the steps leading up into the center pulpit. If one is a stranger, he may be momentarily surprised that the tall thin man wears no gown; but he forgets that in contemplation of the man himself.

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. V., p. 434.
2 Methodist Magazine, March, 1838, p. 207.

His six foot two inch frame is carried erect with a solemnity and dignity which are heightened by his pale countenance. His congregation is used to the pallid appearance; for they know of the years of sickness and pain which have helped to make it so. More than once, however, they have remarked to one another how much paler he seems to be when standing in the high pulpit. As the service begins the minister stands, and one notices the easy calmness of his manner, the grace of the few motions he makes. Thoughtfulness crowns his features which are free from nervousness or agitation, but which are sensitive and obviously quickly responsive to emotion. As he speaks he stands perfectly erect within the pulpit. Although he may speak with great feeling, he seldom alters position and never becomes declamatory. His motions are usually confined to a slight movement of the right hand or a nod of the head. This then is Richard Watson: dignified, free from affectation, calculated to command respect and silent attention.

If in one's imagination he might remain throughout a service, he might begin to see Watson as those who knew and appreciated him did. The sense of God's presence is often extraordinarily manifest in his prayers. When he prays, it seems as if the veil is withdrawn and he is permitted to enter into the holiest of all while the congregation is praying without. As the deep tones of his voice, often tremulous with emotion, fill the chapel, the worshippers feel that surely this man has communion with God and is laying their offerings at the very foot-

stool of the throne.[3] His words proceed with deep seriousness, earnestness, and pleading, with strong expressions of penitence and humiliation, with the recognition of the mediation of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.[4] The people at City Road have been heard to confess that if he had dismissed the congregation on a Sunday evening after the first prayer, they would have been amply rewarded for having assembled.[5] It is to be hoped that the fact that the prayers are usually twenty to twenty-five minutes in length has no direct relationship to their willingness for an early benediction.

Watson's admiration for the Liturgy of the Church of England is unbounded, and all who attend his morning services well know that he advocates its general use by the Methodists in the forenoon worship.[6] He seems attracted to it because of its beauties, but even more, because of the spirit of pure and elevated devotion which breathes through it. When his illness confines him to his home, it is his habit to read it on Sunday as a substitute for public worship.[7]

As Watson begins to recite the hymn, one at first notices his voice: full, clear, deep, sonorous, and finely modulated.[8] Thought of his voice is immediately forgotten, however,

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3 Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, March, 1838, p. 207.
4 Life of Watson, (anonymously compiled) p. 290.
5 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson p. 79.
6 Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 319.
7 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 586.
8 James Dixon, "Character and Writings of Watson," William Willan, Sermons and Outlines by Watson, p. 125.

in the wonder of the hymn, the meaning of which unfolds under his spell as it never has before. The hymn becomes alive, speaks for itself, sends a thrill to one's very soul. Indeed, the soul of the preacher seems to have passed into the hymn to give new meaning to every syllable.[9] It is not difficult to believe, as is said, that his repetition of a single stanza often produces a visible effect on large congregations.[10] Nor is it difficult to understand why he is appreciated as an authority in matters of music among the Wesleyan Methodists. In 1831 he is to publish a supplement to the hymn-book for the Conference. His opinions on music in the chapels is well known, especially in those where he deliberately and specifically disapproved of choirs and singers. He prefers a well-managed organ to a group of small instruments; but he would rather have no instrument at all and trust the congregational singing to the guidance of a pious and judicious leading singer.[11] In regard to the hymns themselves, it is his custom to choose one of his own favorite tunes to fit the words, a custom which was so well received in his former Circuit at Hull that the people continue using his combinations although he has long since left there.

When he begins to preach, one feels that here is a master. In spite of all his other virtues and accomplishments, James Dixon thinks he is at his greatest in his role as a preacher.[12]

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9 James Dixon, op. cit., p. 125.
10 Jackson, op. cit., p. 579.
11 Ibid., pp. 205-206.
12 James Dixon, op. cit., p. 129.

Mr. Watson himself is known to regard preaching as his principal work, along with its pastoral duties, of course.[13] He is always sermonizing, whether it is in the writing of a book, a book review, or simply in private conversation.[14] Usually at the beginning of a sermon, he discloses his subject and the basis of his discourse; the outline is announced in order that the congregation may follow his arguments and illustrations.[15] One will notice that he does not read the sermon. It is said that he attempted to do it once, but upon failing, never tried that method again.[16] A vivid picture of Watson in the pulpit, too vivid to alter, is painted by his fellow minister and son-in-law, James Dixon:

> Some peculiarities of manner were observable. The action was never great, and in the beginning rather slow and measured, but a perfect model of its kind. As the difficulties of a beginning, however, were cleared, and the depths reached, the right hand began to move; then it was stretched out, but never raised higher than the breast; it was never clenched, but the forefinger of a most delicate and beautiful hand stretched out, as in a pointing attitude. Only one deviation from this gesture was observable: when greatly excited, when profoundly feeling the weight of some great truth, before giving utterance to it, and as if pausing for a moment, to find it a more perfect form, he thrust his right hand into his bosom, and then announced the thought in that peculiar posture.
>
> One other singularity may be noticed: when he had finished one of his most beautiful climaxes of reasoning or fancy, he gave his head a majestic nod, with a sort of backward movement, as if he intended to signify to his hearers that they were then, at that point, to consider the matter finished; and, moreover, this nod, it must be confessed, had somewhat a defiant air about it,

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13 Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, March, 1838, p. 210.
14 Richard Watson Dixon, The Life of James Dixon, p. 378.
15 James Dixon, op. cit., p. 127.
16 Ibid., p. 130.

> as if to intimate to the sceptic that he had no fear of his criticism.[17]

Other people describe the peculiar characteristics of his preaching,[18] but none with the same clarity and detail as Dixon.

If picturing Watson in his pulpit is helpful in making him live again at least for a little while in the mind, it is also helpful to discover that he suffered from as common a human liability as forgetfulness. In his early ministry Watson was once delivering a series of talks on the Lord's Prayer. During the course of one of them, in the midst of his eloquence and the development of his theme, he lost all recollection of the subject matter and was forced to conclude the service. Later a friend, Robert Stenson, who was present and who related the incident confessed that "under this peculiar embarrassment, his composure, humility, and submission were very apparent; and these indications of piety made a deep impression upon the congregation. The effect was very striking; and the spiritual good which was done rendered it a time to be remembered."[19] Two other incidents lead one to believe that there were at least a few times when he was not completely calm in the pulpit. Once while preaching at the Waltham-Street Chapel in Hull, he was in such an excited state that he forgot where his text was found and was forced to deliver it by memory rather than read it. On another occasion before the same congregation he pronounced the benediction when he should have prayed the Lord's

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17 James Dixon, op. cit., p. 128.

18 William Willan, Sermons and Outlines by Watson, p. 48.

19 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

Prayer.[20] Were there special reasons for his temporary losses of memory? In the case of the last two incidents related, Jackson associates his agitation with the extreme difficulty he had in finding suitable subjects on which to preach during the course of his ordinary ministry. This suggestion along with the indications of the first incident above might lead one to suspect Watson of entering the pulpit insufficiently prepared at times. Such a charge might be a grave injustice, however; for on at least one occasion marked by a state of perplexity and embarrassment there is evidence that he was prepared. On entering the pulpit one Thursday evening during his ministry in Leicester, he requested the prayers of the congregation on his behalf in a most feeling manner, adding that he had spent nearly the whole day in prayer but was still uncertain as to whether he would be able to preach or not. He read his text (Genesis 6:3), however, and delivered a "striking and impressive" sermon.[21] Among Watson's unpublished sermons is an almost completed treatment of that text; so his agitation was not altogether founded on his lack of preparation. Two answers help to explain his infrequent condition. In the first place, Watson seldom wrote his sermons in full. He supplied himself simply with an elaborate outline of his thoughts on a given text. This, in conjunction with the second, which is the consideration that Watson was a sick man and in acute physical pain during a large part of his life, might well account for his lapses.

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20 Jackson, op. cit., p. 227.
21 Ibid., pp. 57-58.

Another example of Watson without his composure occurred in Hull, an example which, strange as it is, lights another facet of the man. Unusual power attended his preaching one Monday evening. At the close of the service he retired to the vestry where he was followed by many of the congregation crying and inquiring, "What shall we do to be saved?" He seemed stunned by the response to his preaching and asked of a class leader who was standing near by, "What shall we do, brother?" "Let us pray to Him who can save," came the answer. Watson immediately knelt beside the penitents and prayed with them until three of them were able to rejoice in the pardoning mercy of God.[22] Although Watson was widely hailed as an outstanding preacher, he apparently was surprised when his labor, by the Spirit, bore dramatic, immediate fruit. John Wesley would not have been at a loss under such circumstances. The brief occurrence demonstrates two things about Watson's preaching and ministry. He was not accustomed to having his preaching accompanied by a display of the working of God's Spirit in conviction and conversion, as had been many of the Methodists of the preceding generation. His surprise suggests that he did not expect anything immediate to happen as the result of his preaching. This lack of expectancy may offer a partial answer to a later question concerning his ministry.

Rather than leave Watson, the preacher, in a state of perplexity, this illustration of his ability to maintain his composure is offered. Before he had proceeded far into the

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22 Jackson, op. cit., p. 203.

subject of his sermon one morning, a man in a pew immediately in front of him arose and turned around to look at the clock as if to give the preacher a gentle hint. Watson interrupted the sermon to say, "A remarkable change has taken place among the people of this country with regard to the public services of religion. Our forefathers put their clocks on the outside of their places of worship, that they might not be too late in their attendance. We have transferred them to the inside of the House of God, lest we should stay too long in His service. A sad and ominous change!" Addressing the man whose action had instigated the remark, he said, "You need be under no alarm this morning: I shall not keep you beyond the usual time."[23]

As to Watson's own study habits and his method of developing sermons, the evidence from his own pen is scarce and must be supplemented by the observations of his friends. Apparently he early trained his power of concentration to the point of being able to apply it regardless of the surrounding conditions, to the disconcertion of his intimate friends whom he often passed in the streets without recognizing them. Just as Wesley had spent his time on horseback in study, Watson is said to have formed in his mind many of his sermons and speeches while traveling by coach to various Missionary Meetings. When he was at home, it was his habit to read even while taking his meals; and a copy of Valpy's Greek Testament remained in his bedroom. Within the last years of his life he is said to have read all that work while in the process of dressing and undres-

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23 Jackson, op. cit., p. 198.

sing.[24]

Concerning his actual production of sermons, his friends agree in certain particulars. In the first place, his written ones bear but an imperfect resemblance to their vocal counterparts which when preached were almost extemporaneous.[25] That is not to say, however, that they were crude or lacking in preparation. Although he committed little to paper beyond an outline, he endeavored to make himself thoroughly familiar with the subject on which he intended to preach.[26] One might have found him pacing to and fro in his room lost in deep thought for hours on end, studying a text, arranging his own ideas, creating a coherent whole.[27] From such preparation he prepared the outline he intended to use for the actual preaching. During the latter part of his life those outlines were expanded more and more.[28] Likewise, in his later years his sermons became increasingly expository in nature, being examinations and explanations of texts and the practical deductions implied by them. Prayer was an integral part of Watson's preparation for the pulpit. Since he felt that he could not preach with any satisfaction to himself unless the Holy Spirit excited him to more than human equality to the task, nor with any profit to the people unless their understanding and consciences were quickened by the Spirit, he gave himself to prayer prior to attempting to preach.[29]

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24 Jackson, op. cit., p. 555.
25 James Dixon, op. cit., p. 133.
26 Jackson, op. cit., p. 431.
27 Ibid., p. 129.
28 Ibid., pp. 575-76.
29 Ibid., p. 57.

The custom of regularly meeting with the other ministers of the Circuit indubitably contributed to the mutual sharing of ideas and stimulation to study. During his ministry in Wakefield, for instance, he met Mr. Buckley each Saturday. They discussed the work plans for the week, assisted each other in selecting subjects for sermons and in making preparations for the pulpit.[30] Similarly, the practice was continued when he moved to Hull. Indeed, one of his colleagues there remembered him as in a role of teacher of divinity to the small group:

> It was our custom, with our colleagues, to spend one forenoon in the week in discussing some selected subject of divinity, when his richly stored mind would unfold and illustrate the important doctrines of the gospel to our edification: and frequently we knew not which to admire most, the luminous statements which he made, or the humility with which they were given: the teacher generally personating the earnest inquirer.[31]

In regard to the pastoral office, Watson was apparently in no way outstanding but was assiduous in performing his duty,[32] in visiting his people, particularly the sick. He had a special love for children and often gave them small gifts or joined them at their games. This tenderness toward them increased throughout his life.[33] A few of the scattered, preserved letters written by Watson allow one a fleeting glimpse into the personal and pastoral relationship between himself and past parishioners or friends whom he attempts to advise or help. He advises a young man, John Faulkner of Manchester, as to courses

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30 Jackson, op. cit., p. 151.
31 Ibid., pp. 214-15. (quoting Naylor)
32 Ibid., p. 433.
33 Ibid., p. 560.

of study which will prove profitable.[34] Later he pens an appealing passage to the same correspondent who had recently written to him of having fallen in love:

> I am glad you are in love. With the object of your affection I have not the pleasure to be acquainted; but have no doubt she is in every way worthy of it. It is equally conducive to happiness and rectitude to form an honorable attachment of that kind. The human heart is formed for love; and love and friendship are among those efficacious causes which the goodness of the divine Being hath still left on earth to humanize the soul, and to soften the asperities of life.[35]

To another young person, a young lady who had apparently been converted under his ministry, he sends advice in Christian living:

> 1. Rest not a moment without the felt presence of your God. 2. To this end, repose a full and daily confidence in the merits and intercession of your Saviour, through whom alone you can draw near to God. 3. Maintain the inward spirit of prayer, and grateful acknowledgment to God in all things. 4. Fill up leisure moments with useful thinking, and reading, and converse. 5. Seize opportunities of doing good . . . As to daily intercourse with others the following rule is excellent:-
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> "Present with God by recollection seem,
> Yet present by your cheerfulness with men."[36]

His dealings with children and young people indicate an accessible friendliness, the quality of inspiring confidence, and even a lighthearted strain in his nature which more often than not is hidden under the cloak and weight of his other duties. Watson knew pain and illness intimately and was qualified both to comfort and sympathise with those of his flock who

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34 Jackson, op. cit., p. 104.
35 Ibid., p. 107.
36 Watson, Works, Vol. I, pp. 267-68.

were sick. Only one who had ridden great pain to victory could have uttered these words with sincerity beside a sick-bed:

> Pain is a great blessing: it tends to detach our thoughts and affections from the world, and to concentrate them on things eternal. I feel it to be so great a blessing, that I cannot pray for its removal. Pain, sorrow, sickness, death,- its time, circumstances, and manner,- are all in the Covenant. How much is contained in those words: "Nothing shall by any means harm you."[37]

Watson believed the duties imposed upon a minister to be sixfold: 1. the preaching of the gospel; 2. the gathering of those who accept Christ into the communion of His church; 3. the caring for the flock that they may advance in knowledge and grace; 4. the separating of immoral and unruly members from the communion, after due admonition; 5. the perpetuating of the ministry by encouraging those who show evidences of a call to preach and by appointing helpers; 6. the exciting of the people to liberality in supporting the religious institution.[38] Seven years before he produced this list he wrote a letter to Robert Young, a new missionary in Jamaica, in which he recommended several rules by which Young's ministry might be made profitable. One may safely assume that these principles represent those governing Watson's own ministerial life:

> 1. To speak, preach, and labour, every day, as though it were your last on earth . . . 2 To give part of every day to secret reading of the Scriptures, and earnest closet prayer. . . 3. To read something useful in practical and doctrinal divinity, etc., every day . . . 4. To take care of your pulpit preparations . . . Let these preparations be fervently prayed over . . . 5. To

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37 Bunting, op. cit., p. 85.
38 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, pp. 93ff.

converse much with your Class Leaders, and other persons of some standing in the society. . . 6. To visit the sick as much as possible, and catechise children and adults . . . 7. To be always <u>at</u> your work, and <u>in</u> your work, public or private . . . 8. To act in the full spirit of your instructions, whatever others may do.[39]

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39 Jackson, <u>on. cit.</u>, pp. 340-41.

B. Evaluation.

To propose to evaluate the preaching of one whose voice has long since been made silent is to be presumptuous. One might deceive one's self into believing the task would be facilitated had Watson written each of his sermons completely as he preached them. In truth, the reader would then be able to follow the precise journey of thoughts through his mind; but such an itinerary could never lead to the discovery of the sermon as it was preached or to its results in the hearts and lives of its hearers. A service of worship is a living, dynamic experience, made so by the power of God's Spirit working to unite the preacher and the individual member of the congregation with God. To evaluate the preaching of a man, one must experience it. Since that alternative is impossible, more fallible criteria must suffice.

Watson's voice was one of the best known among the Methodists of his day. As a result, one who is trying to "hear him speak" today has at his disposal the testimonies and opinions of Watson's contemporaries who actually heard him. There are also his written sermons, outlines, and fragments which indicate the scope and nature of his subject matter. The records of the Conference during Watson's ministry offer an ambiguous testimony to his effectiveness. These three categories will be examined.

In the fall of 1814 Watson had recently moved from

Wakefield to Hull. Shortly after assuming his new duties he was called upon to preach a Thanksgiving Day sermon. The work so pleased the congregation that they persuaded him to publish it. Not long after, Watson was visiting in one of the Chapels in Hull when this announcement was made from the pulpit:

> You will please to notice that our good brother Watson has been publishing a sermon, which he preached on the Thanksgiving Day; and you may have it at the door. It is a very good sermon, for I have read it myself, and, indeed, you must all know that; for it is like his other sermons which you have heard. I'd have you buy it. It will serve him a little. You know what a poor pittance we have; and, if a brother can in this way, get a penny or twopence, or threepence, I see no harm.[1]

Fortunately, all of the recorded critiques of his sermons are not of this nature. One cannot help but wonder from the above, however, if his published sermons were widely used by other ministers.

Of the characteristics of Watson's preaching, five seem to have been outstanding in the memory of those who heard him: the loftiness of his sermons, the imagery and poetry in them, the solemn and calm delivery of them, the new light shed on old ideas, and the manner in which his ideas embedded themselves in one's memory. Even as early as 1810 when Watson was still a member of the Methodist New Connexion his preaching was characterized as "grand and prophetic"[2]; but those adjectives were soon superseded. Upon hearing Watson for the first time a minister of another communion expressed his feelings to him

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1 T. P. Bunting, Life of Jabez Bunting, D. D., Vol. II, pp. 76-77.

2 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 132.

after the service in the words of Milton:

> Up led by thee
> Into the heaven of heavens I have presum'd,
> An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air.[3]

In recalling the incident Jabez Bunting adds, "Who of us has not repeatedly experienced, under the ministry of our now sainted friend, the like hallowed and delightful emotions?"[4] It was Watson's quality to be able to so captivate the minds of the people that they traveled with him in his lofty flights. James Montgomery, the hymn writer, described the sensation of thus soaring with him in a poet's similes:

> It was the character of his great mind to communicate its own power and facility of comprehension to all minds that came under its influence. He so wholly passed us with his spirit that during his progress through regions of intellect, or mazes of argument, we were not aware of the speed at which we were carried, or the elevation to which he had borne us beyond ourselves, till some mighty thought came rushing by, like some roll of thunder beneath the car of an aeronaut, reminding him that he is far above the clouds.[5]

No less a preacher than Robert Hall, who often heard Watson, discerned this same mark of distinction in his sermons and remarked to a mutual friend, "Mr. Watson soars into regions of thought where scarcely any human being has ever ventured before."[6] There were inevitable times, however, when Watson flew alone, and at least a part of the congregation simply sat and watched him. The candid opinion of one such person was that "though he

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3 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," p. 40.

4 Loc. cit.

5 E. J. Brailsford, Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate, p. 89.

6 Thomas Jackson, Recollections of My Own Life and Times, pp. 263-64.

(Watson) is not dazzled in his vision nor bewildered in his course, yet those who watch his flight grow weary with looking upwards to the glorious heights and 'heavenly places' in which he is expatiating."[7]

To a striking degree those who heard Watson remembered the imagery, poetic quality, and beauty of his language. Although he was as strict and careful as Wesley in guarding his words from error, he was thought to make more free use of the imagination, so that he maintained a proper balance between the gravity of a given subject and beautiful language in which to clothe it.[8] Dixon judged imagination to be one of the chief characteristics of his genius in that, whereas he had devoted no special time to training in the poetic art, without apparent effort he thought and expressed himself in its language.[9] In the later years of Watson's ministry he in part deserted an elaborate approach to preaching, however, and strove increasingly to present his ideas clearly and understandably. He "put forth less of the blossom, and more of the fruit; less of formal and elaborate metaphor, and more of solid sentiment."[10] He did not lose the majesty and beauty of his teaching, but he gained simplicity.

In 1796 Watson, then a fifteen year old lad, was preaching on the Ashby-de-la-Zouch Circuit, commanding congre-

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7 William Willan, Sermons and Outlines by The Rev. Richard Watson, p. 37.

8 Jabez Bunting, op. cit., p. 76. Quoting letter from Rev. John Scott, Manchester, Jan. 15, 1833.

9 Willan, op. cit., pp. 111-12.

10 Jabez Bunting, op. cit., p. 39.

gations equal to his two elder colleagues, and exhibiting in his pulpit manner the "seriousness"of an aged divine.[11] That seriousness, so soon noticeable, developed into the solemnity which characterized the mature man. Whether in a pulpit or on the platform of a Missionary Meeting, Watson invested the undertaking with spiritual grandeur by his calm, solemn manner.[12] The biographer of James Dixon applied another figure to this aspect of Watson as "a solemnity that awed and bore down the hearer."[13] In trying to define the quality, he said:

> The tone of Mr. Watson's mind was very severe; and to this severity, chastened as it was by religion, and relieved by a sweet, playful humour which belonged to his character, were added great intellectual gifts, grandeur of thought, logical precision, and refined taste. All these qualities together produced the overawing solemnity of which we speak.[14]

Watson's ability to clothe old truths in new light was so pronounced that his biographer, Jackson, recalled that quality in the first sermon he ever heard him preach although some twenty years had passed since the occasion. The truths which he heard then were familiar, but "they were placed by Mr. Watson in a light so new and striking" that they seemed to have awakened feelings of which he had previously been unconscious.[15] Even the gentleman who grew "weary" looking into the heights with Watson recognized this aspect of his preaching and appreci-

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11 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, pp. 40-41.

12 Thomas Jackson, The Life of The Rev. Robert Newton, p. 88.

13 Richard Watson Dixon, The Life of James Dixon, p. 178.

14 Loc. cit.

15 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, pp. 152-53.

ated it:

> One is powerfully struck with the flashes, which ever and anon appear, of new light upon old subjects, and with the unexpected, yet most happy introduction of various scriptural phrases and allusions which hide themselves, as it would seem, from ordinary preachers, but before the magic wand of this enchanter come forth in spontaneous profusion, and sparkle in his speech like diamonds.[16]

He associates it with Watson's wide knowledge of and freedom in using scripture as a unit composed of related parts. The biographer of a contemporary of Watson's speaks of hearing him preach and "having new trains of thought opened to his mind."[17] Truly, this is a gift "devoutly to be wished" by any minister.

One of the greatest compliments which can be paid to a preacher is for one to say to him, "I remember something you said in such and such a sermon," assuming, of course, that the thing remembered made a difference to the life. To a notable extent Watson's sermons left an impression which continued with people after they left the Chapel. Like Jackson, Rev. John Beecham remembered in detail a sermon he had heard him deliver some twenty years before.[18] Robert Hall confessed that after hearing Watson the elevation of mind remained with him, so much so, as he said, that "for days I could think of nothing else."[19]

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16 William Willan, op. cit., p. 34.

17 Henry W. Williams, The life of the Rev. Joseph Wood, p. 31.

18 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 179.

19 Brailsford, op. cit., p. 90.

Similar experiences were recorded by others who heard him.[20] James Montgomery admitted that he fell under the spell although he did not realize it at the moment:

> I then first saw and heard Mr. Watson. But while my expectations, from reported speeches in the newspapers, had been highly raised, they were not entirely met; there was so much temperance in the tone, and so little ardour in the delivery of his sentiments; yet even then they made a deeper impression than I was aware of at the time. They recurred to me again and again in solitude.[21]

Perhaps the clarity and simplicity of outline was one of the factors which enabled people to remember Watson's sermons. Although as a young man he was known more for boldness of thought than for regularity of composition,[22] he developed a method of logical, simple construction which was remembered. "Few sermons are so happy as those of Watson in division,"[23] one of his hearers said. Another was impressed by the naturalness of his divisions:

> It is impossible for anyone who hears him not to perceive that his sermons are methodically constructed; but the "heads" - or, as modern phraseology will have it, the "divisions" are eminently natural and simple; and the form of their enunciation shows that he is far above the paltry ambition by which some preachers are so strangely captivated, of tuning the terms in which they are expressed, so as to sound in jingling harmony with one another. In short, they are generally such as any man of plain discourse and moderately good understanding would be prompted to adopt.[24]

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20 By His Son, Memoir of the Rev. Joseph Entwisle, p. 293.

21 Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 181.

22 Ibid., p. 56.

23 Richard Watson Dixon, op. cit., p. 179.

24 Willan, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

Upon turning to his written sermons and outlines, what help does one find in evaluating Watson as a preacher? From the point of view of the qualities noted by his contemporaries, one must confess to very little, nor is it completely fair to seek it. Of the one hundred and seventy-three sermons and fragments which remain of his work, less than a dozen were prepared specifically for publication. In reviewing a book of sermons once, Watson said, "The sermons which have made the deepest impression upon a congregation generally, will, to all present at the delivery, read the worst; and in those who did not hear them, they will often excite surprise at the effect reported to have been produced."[25] The words might well be affixed as a preface to his works. Some of his completed sermons ("Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Bones," Ezekiel 37:9; "Religious Instruction of the Slaves Advocated," I Peter 2:17, for example) still have a vitality about them even when read; and one can imagine, taking into account the difference a hundred and twenty-five years has made in the styles of preaching, that given the life imbued by a personality and by the Holy Spirit the sermons might well have swayed the minds and hearts of congregations. For the present study, however, they bear another kind of evidence. As has been stated, one hundred and seventy-three of the sermons still remain, of which number one hundred and seventy have been printed. Many of the printed copies were made from notes taken by members of Watson's congregations. In at least two cases there are two slightly different versions of the same sermon, indicating

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25 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 468.

either more than one set of notes to have been taken, or the existence of Watson's original notes plus those made by a member of the congregation.

The scope of Watson's preaching is broad in the selection of texts, but he shows a distinct preference for the New Testament. One hundred and two of the sermons are from New Testament texts. In order of preference his sources are the Pauline epistles (38), the synoptic gospels (23), and John (15). John is his favorite book, followed by Matthew (13), Hebrews (10), Luke and Romans (9). Interestingly enough, the book from which he procured the most number of texts is Psalms (20), seconded in the Old Testament by Isaiah (13). His selection of texts, particularly in the New Testament, intimates the theme which most often occupied his preaching, namely, the nature and work of Christ. Accompanying this theme are those associated with the ramifications of salvation and the moral government of God. "Christocentric" is the word most apt to apply to his subject matter while "practical" describes his mode. He was infinitely interested in helping people to know God as He is, and to become reconciled to Him through Christ.

Watson had two main types of sermons as to composition, both of which were well suited to fulfill his evangelical ends. Almost universally he began a sermon with a lengthy introduction explaining the context of his text and perhaps expounding some implication of it. Following this came the body of the sermon which he generally treated in one of two fashions. Most often, the outline consisted of two or three sections which protruded themselves logically from the text itself, and which

offered themselves to exposition. For instance, he has a sermon on II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body." The outline in this case has three parts and might be oversimplified and stated: 1. The person by whom the world is to be judged is Christ; 2. Every individual is to be put to the bar to receive his trial; 3. The rules of judgement. Other representatives of the same type are found in the sermons on Matthew 6:22-23, II Corinthians 3:18, John 1:14, John 20:30-31, to name a few. The second group is characterized by more sections, the ideas of which cluster around the main theme of the text but sometimes grow less directly from it. Thus, the outline of his sermon on Galatians 4:20, "I stand in doubt of you," might read: 1. I stand in doubt that some of you are acquainted with essential truths of the gospel; 2. I doubt that the truths of the gospel affect you; 3. Your goodness is as a morning cloud which passes; 4. You stop short of full and complete conversion; 5. You are not as interested in the welfare of Zion as you ought to be; 6. Some of you are again under the domination of the flesh. The sermons on Psalm 110: 1-3, Proverbs 4:18, Daniel 9:24, and Matthew 15:1-13 fall into this category. Invariably, Watson closed his sermon with a section, or at least some remarks, on the practical application of that which he had said.

To what extent was Watson's ministry successful in drawing people into the Church of Jesus Christ and in helping them to live better lives? To supply an answer to this question is difficult and dangerous, difficult because by far the major-

ity of the anonymous hundreds of individuals who find guidance, strength, or comfort in the ministry of a given man never commit their experiences to writing, dangerous because one might so easily on insufficient evidence reach an entirely erroneous conclusion. In Watson's case, there is little doubt but what he was regarded as an able servant of God, that he was listened to with deep appreciation, and that his sermons had the power to move people. There are two bits of evidence, however, which cannot be accounted for if one would make a whole-hearted affirmation of his success in this field. In the first place, in spite of the laurels heaped upon him by his colleagues, they sometimes admit that whereas he was highly esteemed, he was not particularly popular.[26] One might truthfully answer that popularity is no criterion of effectiveness. The remarks of his co-laborers add weight to each other though. One said, "His stated congregation was small, and did not generally appear to appreciate the unparalleled excellence of his discourses."[27] Buckley affirmed that his ministry in Wakefield did not attract the attention which it deserved except among the more discerning persons belonging to the congregations.[28] Watson himself recognized this at times and expressed to his more intimate friends his regret that he saw so little fruit of his ministry.[29] His sentiments might also be interpreted as the humility of a

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26 Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 56.
27 Ibid., p. 132.
28 Ibid., pp. 151-52.
29 Ibid., pp. 131-32.

consecrated and conscientious man.

An examination of the records of the Circuits in which Watson served offers some light to the question. It must be remembered, however, that since he served none of these Circuits alone but in conjunction with other ministers, the full load of neither the credit nor the blame falls solely on his shoulders. In 1812 he re-entered the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion and was sent to Wakefield for two years. During that period the membership rose from 930 to 1012, an increase of 82. From 1814 to 1816 he served in Hull where the membership increased by 220, from 1780 to 2000. Under his ministry in the London East Circuit, 1816 to 1818, the increase was still greater, 498, from 4000 to 4498. In the years he spent in the London West Circuit, 1818 to 1821, an increase of 180 occurred from 3000 to 3180. Until the time he became the resident Missionary Secretary in London in 1821, the Circuits in his care had shown an increase of 980 members, or more than a hundred a year. When he returned to the pastoral ministry in 1827, he was sent to Manchester. In the two years of his work there the Circuit lost 320 members, from 2050 to 1730. The following three years were spent in North London (City Road), which showed a decrease of 25 at the end of that time. Thus, in the last five years of his ministry his Circuits lost an average of slightly more than 70 a year. How is one to account for such differences? One solution might be that Watson had lost the spirit of expectation as previously suggested, which is vital to the ministry; but that is only supposition. Perhaps his illness, which increased rapidly in the last years of his life until it necessitated his re-

moval from pastoral responsibilities in 1832, affected his stamina and ability to work; but in spite of sickness, he finished his Institutes and wrote a biography of Wesley, a Bible dictionary, part of a commentary, and pamphlets during this period. The real answer seems to lie in the turmoil which arose in the wake of the Leeds organ case and Watson's part in it.[30] The loss to the societies in Leeds was heavy as a result of the affair. Watson's "Affectionate Address" on the matter might have alienated some of his own flock who sympathised with the disgruntled in Leeds. It is interesting to note, however, that Wesleyan Methodism's strength in Britain increased by over 10,000 from 1827 to 1829, indicating that the disruption remained for the most part localized. As for the loss of twenty-five in North London under his ministry, as was previously pointed out, one of the reasons for Watson's being sent there was the deplorable condition of the Circuit in 1829. That only twenty-five were lost in three years may be the highest compliment to Watson's power in swaying people.

What then shall one say of Watson as a preacher and minister? The weight of testimony warrents the recognition of his being among the first rank[31] of the preachers of his day, a "master in the art."[32] Though his style seems faded and his eloquence worn, one need not look far in his work to find his firm grasp upon the redeeming love of God as seen in Jesus

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30 See Part III, Chapter 5,B.

31 A. W. Harrison, B. A. Barber, G. G. Hornby, and E. T. Davies, The Methodist Church, Its Origin, Divisions, and Reunion, p. 69.

32 Richard Watson Dixon, op. cit., p. 89.

Christ; and undoubtedly he clothed that truth in language which stirred the hearts of his people and lifted them to new heights. Surely, one of whom young people could say, "It was impossible to hear him preach, and not be in love with religion," rendered a great service through that preaching.[33] As to his total ministry, God alone can know his full value. The measure is not of numbers but of souls and influence, and who can say his influence is not yet alive unto the fourth generation through some life that he touched?

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33 Jabez Bunting, op. cit., p. 79.
(Letter from Rev. John Scott, Manchester, Jan. 15, 1833.)

CHAPTER 2

THE BUILDER OF METHODIST MISSIONS

In no field did Watson labor more diligently than in the effort to forward the missionary activities of the Wesleyan Methodist body. From the inception of the Leeds meeting, to his death, having completely devoted much of his time and energy to the cause, he became, more than any other one man, recognized as its leader and defender. It is not an exaggeration to say that the mantle which fell from the shoulders of Dr. Thomas Coke alighted on Watson, and he wore it nobly. The purpose of this chapter is to examine and evaluate his efforts in this regard. It is divided into four sections. The first is an attempt to demonstrate Watson's relations to the roots of Methodist missions in Wesley, Coke, and the beginning of the organized Methodist Missionary Society in Leeds in 1813. In the second, his activities on behalf of the cause are set down. In the third is described in some detail the occasions on which he was called upon to defend the program. The last purports to evaluate his labors.

A. The Beginnings of Methodist Missions.

The dream of missions was not new in the Methodist Connexion in Watson's day. The seed had already been planted by John Wesley and watered by Thomas Coke. Wesley himself would probably have been the first to admit that he had inherited the

seed from his own family background as well as his religious convictions. In the mid-seventeenth century when the light of the missionary ideal was flickering low, his grandfather, who was among the 2,000 ejected clergy of 1662, earnestly sought to go in missionary service to Surinam in the Dutch East Indies, but was prevented by family circumstances.[1] John's father in the next generation cherished a desire for missionary service in India, China, and Abyssinia which was never realized. Even in the last year of his life he regretted that he was not young enough to go in service to Georgia.[2] Susanna Wesley, John's mother, fell under the spell of the story of the Danish missionaries, Ziegenbalg and Plutschau, and their work at Tranquebar to such a degree that she said, "For several days I could think or speak of little else."[3] The impression made on her by the narrative induced her to give missionary instruction to her children and, doubtless, lingered in her mind when she said, many years later at the departure of two of her sons for Georgia, "Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more."[4]

To what event in the life of Wesley can one look as the beginning of Methodist missions? Some might point to his own missionary experience in Savannah, Georgia. Certainly by the time he said, "I look upon all the world as my parish," the

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1 G. G. Findlay and W. W. Holdsworth, The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Vol. I, p. 29.
2 John Telford, A Short History of Wesleyan Methodist Foreign Missions, p. 3.
3 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 29.
4 Ibid., pp. 29-30.

flame had been kindled. To this recognition of Christian responsibility to all men has been extravagantly, but not without some justification, attributed the commencement of the "world expansion of Protestantism."[5] Actually, the missionary program of Methodism was inauspiciously set in motion on January 17, 1758, when Wesley preached at Wandsworth in the home of Nathaniel Gilbert, who was for some years the Speaker of the House of Assembly in Antigua. Wesley records in his journal for that day, "Two negro servants of his and a mulatto appear to be much awakened. Shall not his saving health be made known to all nations?"[6] Gilbert returned to Antigua two years later and became an evangelist. By the time he died in 1774 there were 200 Methodists in the island.[7] In 1768 the "first Methodist missionaries", Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, were sent from England to New York in answer to the request of Methodists in the new land.[8]

The second period of Methodist missions might be dated from the meeting of Wesley and Coke in the August of 1776. Coke, who was twenty-nine at the time, was to become the first great leader of the work and to expend his life and resources for it over a period of almost forty years. His name and efforts were known by all classes of English society. Wilberforce once said of him, "I wish I could forget his little round face and figure. Any one who wished to take off a Methodist, could not have done

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5 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 32.
6 John Wesley, Journals, Vol. 4, p. 247.
7 Telford, op. cit., p. 3.
8 Loc. cit.

better than exactly copy his manner and appearance."[9] Until 1790 Coke carried the burden of missions almost alone, making repeated trips across the Atlantic and financing the work as best he could. By that time, however, the consciences of Methodists had begun to awaken to their responsibility; and the Conference appointed the first "Missionary Committee," composed of Coke, Alexander Mather, Thomas Rankin, James Rogers, Henry Moore, Adam Clarke, John Baxter, William Warrener, and Matthew Lamb.[10] Their charge included nineteen missionaries, eleven stations, and 5,350 members in the West Indies, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. Thus, for the first time the missionary work became an integral part of the Methodist system.[11] Three years later the committee had to appeal to the Conference for its support. The work had progressed and membership on the foreign fields had increased; but all available funds had been exhausted, yea, more than exhausted. The Conference, thereupon, authorized a general collection to be made by the societies on behalf of missions for that year.[12] In 1796 the Conference again directed, "Let a general collection be made by the preachers in every town in England where Dr. Coke has not made application within six months before the meeting of the Conference."[13] Thereafter, collections were made annually; but Coke still carried the heaviest part of the load of responsibility for finance

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9 John Stoughton, Religion in England from 1800 to 1850, Vol. I, p. 312.
10 Telford, op. cit., p. 27.
11 Loc. cit.
12 Ibid., p. 33.
13 Ibid., p. 34.

and direction. The Conference of 1804 appointed another committee and adopted rules for the management of the missions. From that date regular reports of the work were printed.[14]

During Coke's ministry he was tireless in his activity for missions. In a true sense, the world was his parish, the carrying of Christ's gospel to all people his personal destiny and adventure. The adventure outreached the man as the result of the bigness of the dream and his success. For that reason it was necessary that the entire Methodist body should capture the dream and make it its own. The actions of the Conferences in authorizing collections had moved in this direction, but the program was not fully assimilated. At the Conference of 1813 the sixty-seven year old Coke proposed a journey to Ceylon and Java. Upon being opposed on the grounds of expediency, lack of funds, his age, and the need of him at home, he burst into tears and told the Conference, "If you will not let me go, it will break my heart!"[15] Permission was given, but the anticipation of Coke's departure caused some to reflect seriously on the future of the mission program. On October 6th of that year a meeting was held in Leeds which became a milestone both in the history of Wesleyan Methodist missions and in the life of Richard Watson.

The immediate cause of the Leeds meeting was concern for the mission program at the removal of Coke. Two questions seem to have been uppermost in the minds of those who were in-

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14 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 36.
15 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. 1, p. 134.

terested: "How will the connexion finance Coke's expedition?" and "With Coke gone how will finances be gathered to support the rest of the mission program?" Coke had been the chief collector for missions for years and had raised about 6,000 pounds annually by his own exertions. Now, not only would his efforts be at an end but also the cost of a new mission would be added. Either consciously or unconsciously other causes were at work. The force of the missionary movement outside Methodism was being felt. The Baptist Missionary Society had been founded in 1792, followed in 1794 by the London Missionary Society, which had an interdenominational beginning but eventually became Congregational, and the Church Missionary Society in 1799 when the Anglicans removed themselves from the London Missionary Society. A pressure from those groups was being made on Methodists. In October, 1812, Dr. Coke wrote to the Missionary Committee from North Shields, "The L.M.S. are forming committees of two or three of our friends, to raise annual subscriptions among our Societies and hearers for the support of their Missions."[16] He continued by pointing out that unless Methodism adopted similar means for harnessing the generosity of her own people, then they would see thousands of pounds from Methodist folk poured into Asia in the establishment of Calvinism in that immense area. With concern he added, "I am certain that our competent people (and they can only be applied to for annual subscriptions) will subscribe annually for CALVINISTIC Missions, if

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16 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 37.

they do not subscribe for ours."[17] Behind the willingness of the people to subscribe to even a "Calvinistic Mission" was the deeper cause of the theological basis of Methodism. They believed in God who had made his love manifest in Jesus Christ in order that all men might be redeemed. They knew themselves to be sinners saved by grace through faith and dependence on that love. They had been urged by Wesley and the ministers to strive toward the goal of their own love being made perfect. It was inevitable that that love should not cease with their visible neighbors, but that it should be enlarged to include all men; therefore, they were ready and eager to support the banner of the missionary cause. The foundation of an advanced program of missionary activity had been laid before the superstructure was begun at the Leeds meeting.

As to who was the actual father of the idea to organize a Missionary Society for Leeds, there are various opinions. Jabez Bunting attributed the credit to George Morley who was then superintendent of the Leeds Circuit.[18] Morley related that he had been stimulated by the events of Conference in 1813 to propose some action to prevent the necessity of diminishing existing missionary activity in order to open the new field in Ceylon. Upon returning from Conference he approached his colleagues in the Circuit about forming simply a Circuit Society. The ministers at Bramley and Wakefield were consulted and eagerly joined the plan.[19] One of the ministers at Bramley at the time

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17 Findlay and Holdsworth, on. cit., p. 38.
18 Ibid., p. 39.
19 T. P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, D.D., Vol. II, pp. 44-45.

was James Everett who later described the origin in a slightly different manner. Mr. Scarth, a layman of Leeds, had repeatedly remarked to William Dawson, "The missionary cause must be taken out of the doctor's hands; it must be made a public, a common cause."[20] While visiting the Conference Scarth expressed his views to George Marsden who agreed with them. Everett believed it not impossible that Scarth might have been the germ of the whole idea.[21] After his opinion had been committed to print Everett received a letter from a George Matthewman in which Mr. Matthewman sought to correct him and affirmed that the idea had originated with him. In September, 1813, he was a steward in the society at Skinner Lane. He described the beginning as follows:

> On my arriving home to dinner one day, I was presented with a small printed note, which had been left at my house, requesting the inmates to become weekly, monthly, or annual subscribers to another society. On perusing this, I immediately exclaimed, "I must go down to Mr. Scarth to consult with him on the subject." After a short interview we proceeded to Mr. Morley, who was then the superintendent of the circuit, to lay the matter before him. After several private meetings which were attended by the preachers and other friends, resolutions were come to that a public meeting should be called.[22]

In another account a Mr. Briggs of Leeds first offered the idea to Dr. Coke in the spring or early summer of 1813.[23] The diversity of accounts offered for the origin of the

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20 Abel Stevens, The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century Called Methodism, pp. 356-57.

21 Richard Chew, James Everett: A Biography, pp. 106-107.

22 Ibid., p. 108.

23 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 39.

meeting demonstrates that missions were on people's minds, and the time was ripe for a further step to be taken. Many people doubtless felt that something should be done; but it is enough to say that Morley took the step.

When Bunting and Pilter whole-heartedly concurred with Morley, they consulted Naylor and Everett at Bramley. Upon receiving their co-operation Bunting is said to have exclaimed, "Now we will go on to Wakefield, and consult Mr. Buckley and Mr. Watson; and, if they will join, we will have a meeting."[24] Thus, Watson and Buckley were approached. When they, too, gladly agreed, they were asked to preach preparatory sermons for the occasion. Watson was reluctant to comply with the request. He had but recently been readmitted as a Wesleyan Methodist; and since the plan was an innovation, he thought perhaps some of the senior preachers might think he was trying to introduce a novelty. As a result, he suggested that he be allowed to have only a subordinate part in the event; but when they insisted, he agreed to preach.[25] October 6th was set as the day for the meeting. The group of ministers addressed a letter to the Missionary Committee in London informing them of their intention and requesting formal sanction. They first received an unofficial answer from Robert Smith, the Secretary:

> It is impossible for me to tell you the strong sensations that some of us felt when we read, in the last Evangelical Magazine, that the Dissenters had recently preached and made collections in one of our chapels in Leeds for their Missions, at a

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24 Bunting, op. cit., p. 45.
25 Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 136.

> time when our own Missionary affairs were so awfully embarrassed. -I am sure the Missionary Committee will be exceedingly delighted when they hear of your plan for assisting our own Missionary cause.[26]

One is somewhat surprised to discover that in spite of the "embarrassed" state of affairs, the Committee in London did not offer its unanimous blessing to the Leeds undertaking. A second official letter signed by Coke and Smith and written, one may believe with reluctance, by the former said:

> A Committee of preachers of the London East, London West, and Deptford Circuits were assembled yesterday morning, according to regular summons, and your letter was read to them. After a long debate, a very great majority of them agreed, that something ought to be done, in a general way, for the support of our own missions, and to prevent the money which our friends are willing to subscribe for missionary matters being turned into foreign channels; but, as all the brethren were not fully prepared to decide finally on this important subject, they therefore leave you to your own judgment in respect of the plan you judge best to adopt.[27]

The "very great majority" was an eleven to two vote.[28] The Leeds ministers, therefore, received the indecisive approval of the London Committee.

On the evening of October 5th a preparatory sermon was preached by Buckley at Armley, between Leeds and Bramley, in the then recently opened Wesley Chapel. At 6:00 on the morning of the meeting a prayer service was held. Richard Watson preached his first missionary sermon in the forenoon in the Albion Street Chapel, from the text, "Come from the four winds,

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26 Bunting, op. cit., pp. 47-48.
27 Loc. cit.
28 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 44.

O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."[29] A public meeting at which Thomas Thompson, M. P., presided was held during the afternoon. It was at Thompson's recommendation that a District rather than a Circuit Society was formed as a result of the meeting.[30] Prior to the meeting those who were to participate assembled in the vestry. Naylor later recalled their feelings over the new experience:

> As the time drew near we gathered in the vestry, and the mass of people assembled in the chapel was appalling to behold. . .The resolutions were distributed, but no one moved to go into the chapel, while one after another was saying, "I know not what to say. I never was at a meeting of the kind." Dr. Bunting in his impressive manner remarked, "And I know not what to say, but I am willing to be a fool for Christ's sake!"[31]

Their apprehension must have been overcome, for eighteen resolutions were made and seconded during the afternoon, affording ample opportunity for those present to express their sentiments. So ample were the expressions that the latter part of the resolutions were hastily passed due to the approaching hour for the evening service.[32] Of the resolutions, the third approved the formation of the Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District; the fourteenth, moved by Thomas Jackson, nominated Bunting, Watson, Scarth, and a Mr. Sigston as secretaries for the coming year; the sixteenth, moved by Bunting, requested Watson to prepare an address to the friends of Methodist missions and the Christian public on the subject of the meeting;

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29 Ezekiel 37:9.
30 Watson, op. cit., p. 136.
31 Quoted by Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 46.
32 The Methodist Magazine, 1813, December, p. 953.

and the eighteenth, moved by Rev. Atmore, requested Watson to publish the sermon he had preached that morning. Richard Reece preached the evening sermon. No collection was taken either at the sermons or the afternoon meeting; yet, before the next meeting which was held in the following February a sum of over a thousand pounds had been contributed.[33] From the day of this meeting until his death, Richard Watson's name was inextricably bound with missions. His talents which had lain partially dormant seem to have burst forth to meet the sun of this new challenge.

As a result of the meeting Watson complied in their request and published his sermon and an Address to the general public. The sermon was given a review consisting primarily of excerpts in the Methodist Magazine[34] for June, 1814. The proceeds from the publication, some thirty pounds, Watson sent to the secretary of the committee in London.[35] His Address was widely distributed and became no small factor in the development of the mission program during the following year. At the first anniversary of the Leeds Meeting the following statement was made:

> For the very liberal contributions thus enumerated, the Committee consider the Society to be deeply indebted, under the divine blessing, to the free circulation of an "Address to the Public," drawn up at the request of the General Meeting, by the Rev. Richard Watson, in which the extent and importance of the Methodist Missions were briefly stated, and their claims on

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33 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 52.
34 The Methodist Magazine, June, 1814, Vol. 37, p. 436ff.
35 Bunting, op. cit., p. 91.

> the support of the friends of religion were ably and energetically enforced. Of this Address many thousands have been distributed, under the direction of the Local Committees.[36]

As the news of the meeting circulated throughout the Conference it was greeted with mixed emotions. It was clearly an innovation lacking the authority of the Conference. Samuel Bradburn, then chairman of the Manchester District and one of the most popular of the older preachers, condemned it strongly and stigmatized it as "Kilhamite."[37] Interestingly enough, when the plan had proved its value, Bradburn denounced his first opinion and went so far as to suggest that similar local committees be formed "to have an eye to our schools and to all our other concerns, as well as to our Missions."[38] Joseph Benson expressed his approval of the plan.[39] Entwisle approved but held a reserved attitude toward the admission of lay members to the committees. He said in a letter to Bunting, "We must guard against lay influence: and yet there is great propriety in making Circuit stewards members of the committee, and we ought to avail ourselves of their talent and influence."[40] Walter Griffith, President of the Conference for that year and an intimate friend of Bunting, sent his blessings in a letter expressing regret that the plan was not followed in London.[41] Clarke, writing to Bunting from London explained the lack of action there, "To our

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36 Watson, op. cit., p. 141.
37 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 42.
38 Ibid., p. 53.
39 Bunting, op. cit., p. 55.
40 Loc. cit.
41 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 54.

reproach, we are calling no missionary meeting. Why? Because we are not agreed among ourselves."[42] The plan met the further approval of Barber, with the reservation that he was not fond of their "puffing so much at the outset." In his opinion, Methodists acted in more simple ways.[43]

Thus a new stage in the missionary program was begun amid both approval and doubt. The success of the activity, however, was soon to turn all doubt into commendation, as in Bradburn's case.

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42 Bunting, op. cit., pp. 59-60.
43 Ibid., p. 56.

B. Watson, the builder of Missions.

The Leeds Meeting on October 6th was but the beginning of the missionary labors of Watson. In the remaining weeks of the year he became initiated to the tasks which were to occupy much of his time and energy during the succeeding twenty years. On November 20th, Halifax held a meeting at which he gave his first address for missions.[1] In rapid succession Hull and Sheffield followed in the formation of their Societies. Watson preached in Hull on Thursday, November 25, from the text, "And I saw another angel fly into the midst of heaven, etc."[2] The following day he preached the same sermon in Sheffield.

It is impossible now to know Watson's complete activities for any year since unlike Wesley he kept no diary. During the year 1814, however, he was busy for the cause. He carried the responsibility of being one of the secretaries for the Leeds District Society. He attended a meeting in Wakefield, his home Circuit, on February 7th, at which he spoke to the resolutions offered. Two months later he fulfilled the same function at a meeting in Newcastle. At the first anniversary of the Leeds Meeting Watson was on the platform although the preacher for the occasion was Robert Newton who had been moved to Wakefield by the preceding Conference. The event marked the first of many sermons preached by Newton for Missions. It was also the first

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. 1, p. 142.
2 Rev. 14:6 - 7.

time the "triumvirate" of Watson, Bunting, and Newton stood on the same platform.[3]

On February 22, 1815, a Society was formed in Manchester. Watson, Bunting, and Newton were all requested to preach for the occasion. In a letter to Bunting prior to the meeting Watson intimates that he had also preached for missions at Newcastle. The letter is further interesting as a demonstration of the easy and informal relationship between the three men, and of the lighter vein in Watson's nature:

> I thank you, it is true, as in courtesy bound, for telling me what Newton intends to preach from; but as I do not care a rush about that, because he comes last, I should have thanked you twice had you informed me of your own intentions. Trusting to your mercy, I must now tell you, that you may not run me down, either in the dark or in the day, that, for want of either time or inclination, or ability to make a sermon more to my mind, I must trust to my Newcastle subject.[4]

During the year Watson conceived the project of writing a history of Methodist Missions and wrote his friend Bunting about it.[5] For some unknown reason he abandoned the plan.

By 1816 Watson's name was known throughout the Conference in association with missions. When the District Society in London planned its anniversary meeting for the spring, Watson's assistance was requested. In compliance with the request he preached at City Road on the morning of April 25.[6] Upon returning to Hull from London he attended the Auxiliary Society meeting for the District and read a report which he as secretary had prepared.[7]

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3 T. P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, D. D., Vol. II, p. 77.

4 Loc. cit.

5 Ibid. p. 82.

6 Watson, op. cit., p. 182.

7 Ibid., p. 189.

The Conference which met in that summer appointed him to the London East Circuit, where in conjunction with Marsden he served as Secretary of the Missionary Committee, an office which he was to occupy for the remainder of his life.[8] The Conference also approved the employment of a permanent clerk and the securing of a separate business office for the Committee. In September two rooms on the first floor of a Mr. Bruce's house, 4 City Road, London, became the first missionary office. Watson and Marsden were given the assistance of a clerk for five hours daily for fifteen shillings.[9] The first General Report of Methodist Missions was written by Watson and published toward the end of the year.[10] In words usually reserved for Bunting, his son and biographer said of Watson in relation to the year 1816, "Watson, both by lip and pen, became the foremost champion of the cause."[11]

The Conference of 1817 was an important one for missions. It directed the formation of a Society in every District, or at least, the appointment of a District Treasurer who would act as liaison between the General Treasurer and the Circuits.[12] It approved an outline of a plan of a general Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society which was hastily prepared by Watson, and it recommended that he present the completed plan to the following

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8 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writing of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 239.

9 G. G. Findlay and W. W. Holdsworth, The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Vol. I, p. 99.

10 Watson, op. cit., p. 199.

11 T. P. Bunting, op. cit., p. 108.

12 Ibid., p. 125.

Conference. After Conference the business offices of the Committee were moved from Bruce's house to 77 Hatton Garden, which became the first Mission House.[13] In December Watson was requested by the Committee to prepare a set of rules of instruction for the missionaries, with which request he complied.[14] Also, toward the end of the year, the Missionary Report he prepared was published.[15] That Watson's efforts on behalf of the mission cause were becoming known beyond the Wesleyan Methodist body is evident from the fact that he was asked to take part in the Annual Meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society that year.[16]

In anticipation of the approval by the Conference of the plan for a general society, the first meeting of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was held on May 4, 1818, at City Road Chapel.[17] Watson, Bunting, Newton, Clarke, Benson, James Wood, and Marsden were among the speakers on the "all star" program.[18] At the Conference the plan, which was drawn up under the title of "Laws and Regulations of the General Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society" and which was the work of Watson assisted by Bunting, was approved.[19] The plan, conceived with thoroughness and foresight, remained unaltered until 1884 when it was revised; but even then Watson's original work was retained in substance and form.[20] In appreciation of Watson's service to missions for the

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13 John Telford, A Short History of Wesleyan Methodist Foreign Missions, p. 71.
14 Watson, op. cit., p. 275.
15 Ibid., p. 220.
16 Ibid., p. 215.
17 Ibid., p. 243.
18 T. P. Bunting, op. cit., p. 146.
19 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 73.
20 Ibid., p. 77.

preceding year, his brethren of the Conference rendered their unanimous thanks to him.[21] Watson was again appointed to the duties of both the London West Circuit and the missionary secretaryship. After Conference, in early November, Watson with Bunting journeyed to Bristol for the ordination of several missionaries about to embark for the West Indies. The service was conducted in the King's Street Chapel, and Watson preached.[22] A similar service was held a month later on December 29th in City Road Chapel, at which time Watson preached prior to the departure of seven other missionaries for the charges they had received at Conference.[23] Before the year closed the annual Report of the Methodist Missions, prepared by Watson, was published.[24]

The expanding program of missions taxed even the increased funds made available for it by the Missionary Societies. In January, 1819, therefore, an appeal was made to the Auxiliary Societies to renew their efforts. To promote the ends sought in the appeal, Watson and Bunting toured northern England during the spring, visiting the anniversary meetings of the societies at Liverpool, Manchester, Derby, Macclesfield, Wakefield, Hull, Sunderland, Shields, and Newcastle.[25] By May 3rd, however, Watson had returned to London when the Annual Meeting of the

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21 Watson, op. cit., p. 245.

22 Ibid., p. 250. The missionaries departing were: Messrs. Pennock, Hirst, Marshall, Ames, Adams, and Hartley.

23 George J. Stevenson, City Road Chapel, London, and its Associations, pp. 295-96. The missionaries were: Messrs. Allen, Archbell, Bolt, Fletcher, Hume, Roberts, and Stead.

24 Watson, op. cit., p. 264.

25 Ibid., p. 270.

General Society was held at City Road. He seconded a resolution of thanks to Sir Alexander Johnson, the late Chief Justice of Ceylon, for his kindness toward Methodist Missions in that island.[26] Again, before the conclusion of 1819 Watson submitted to the public the Missionary Report.[27]

In 1820 Watson and Bunting, in addition to other duties, toured Cornwall for missions. Watson again prepared the annual report, although it was not published until early in 1821.

During the spring of 1821 Watson assisted in several anniversaries of Auxiliary and Branch Missionary Societies throughout England. Prior to the Meeting of the General Society at City Road on April 30, he prepared the report for that body.[28] The Conference that summer relieved Watson of his pastoral duties and appointed him a resident secretary of the mission work along with Joseph Taylor, who had served in that capacity for the preceding two years.[29] As the fall progressed Watson traveled to Leeds, Doncaster, Alford, Wainfleet, and Retford for missionary meetings.[30]

In February and March of 1822 Watson, with James Reece and Joseph Taylor toured Cornwall. He, also in the early spring, completed and published the Missionary Report for 1821. At the Annual Meeting of the Society at City Road on April 26, he presented the report of that body, which he prepared. Following the

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26 Report of Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 1819, p. VI.
27 Watson, op. cit., p. 288.
28 Ibid., p. 330.
29 Telford, op. cit., p. 102.
30 Watson, op. cit., p. 340.

anniversary in London he visited the west of England, preaching for missions at Bristol, Tiverton, and Frome.[31] The fall and winter found Watson ill and almost totally incapacitated.

Although he remained ill throughout most of the year 1823, Watson was not idle. He compiled the Annual Report and the report to the General Society in the spring.

Not until the spring of 1824 did he regain his strength sufficiently to travel; but as soon as possible, he journeyed to Burslem and Bristol.[32] The Annual Report written by him was published in the spring. The year was a precarious one for missionaries and the mission program. The execution of a missionary in Demerara and riots which resulted in the destruction of a Methodist chapel in Barbadoes created an atmosphere of tension. Watson was invited to preach for the meeting of the General Society at City Road on April 29. His sermon, which will be discussed in more detail was entitled, "Religious Instruction of Slaves in the West Indies Advocated and Defended."

Although the spring of 1825 found him still in a delicate state of health, Watson prepared the Annual Report and made a tour of the north, preaching for Missionary Societies at Liverpool, Manchester, Newark, Stafford, and other places.[33] He returned to London to present the report to the General Society Meeting at City Road in April and May. At Conference he drew up the resolution of thanks extended to Buxton, Butterworth, Smith, Brougham, and Lushington for their kindness to Methodist Missions

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31 Watson, op. cit., p. 353.
32 Jackson, op. cit., p. 389.
33 Watson, op. cit., p. 407.

when the Barbadoes matter reached Parliament.[34] From Conference he went with William France to Gloucester where he preached for a missionary meeting. Impaired health again necessitated a rest for him during the fall, but the relief received from it was only temporary.

In the spring of 1826 Watson published the Report of Missions for the preceding year. When the meeting of the General Society was held at City Road, Joseph Butterworth, a Methodist member of Parliament and the Treasurer of the Missionary Society, was in the chair. Little did Watson realize that the Society was so soon to lose its Treasurer and that he would preach Butterworth's funeral sermon on July 9th. The funeral was held at Great Queen Street Chapel,[35] and the sermon was later published. When the Conference met that summer, it elected Watson President for the coming year. This action may be regarded as a token of the appreciation and esteem Watson's brethren had for him and the work he had done. With his accession to the presidency he ostensibly relinquished his secretaryship but continued to retain his connexion with the Missionary Society. In October he journeyed to Leeds to assist with the anniversary of the Auxiliary Society for that District.[36] As he sat on the platform, his mind must have wandered back through the years to the meeting of 1813 which had launched his missionary activities.

In spite of his having been removed from his direct

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34 Jackson, op. cit., p. 413.
35 Watson, op. cit., p. 432.
36 Ibid., p. 439.

responsibilities as Missionary Secretary, Watson was called upon to prepare the Report for the year 1826; and he complied, publishing it in the spring of 1827. During the early summer Watson visited Scotland. While in Edinburgh in May he preached for the anniversary of the Auxiliary Missionary Society and delivered an address at its public meeting.[37] From Scotland his official position took him to London, Cornwall, Dublin, Belfast, and Manchester before Conference.[38] One may assume that whatever else his responsibilities were in those places, he made use of the opportunities to commend his favorite cause. With the expiration of his presidency at Conference Watson was appointed to Manchester to succeed Bunting. For the first time in eleven years he found himself away from London and the mission offices, but not for long. He was appointed an Honorary Secretary to the Missionary Society and continued a regular correspondence with his colleagues on subjects related to the work.[39] One of his last services before leaving London was the preparation of the Annual Report for 1827.[40]

For the next few years Watson's activities for missions were confined largely to his own Circuits. When he was invited to preach on behalf of the annual meeting in London, however, he accepted and preached at Great Queen Street on the morning of May 2, 1828, from the text, Ecclesiastes 11: 1-6.[41] In the follow-

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37 Watson, op. cit., p. 449.
38 Ibid., p. 449ff.
39 Ibid., p. 491.
40 Ibid., p. 462.
41 Ibid., p. 465.

ing year he again preached for the same cause at Great Queen Street, but he was so indisposed as to be unable to participate in any of the public meetings.[42] Since the Conference appointed him to the London North Circuit in 1829, he attended the annual meeting in May of 1830 but lifted his voice only to a resolution. In 1831 he again preached for the meeting at City Road on Sunday evening, May 1, but took no part in the public meeting, which was held the following day at Exeter Hall.[43]

Despite his illness during the spring of 1832, Watson attended the annual meeting at the end of April. His constantly declining state of health in no way lessened the activity of his mind or his deep concern for missions, and they needed concern that spring. An uprising in Jamaica had again placed the mission program and the safety of missionaries in jeopardy from the slave owners. At the annual meeting Watson spoke unofficially to a resolution of thanks to the government for its assurance of protection for the missionaries.[44] The Conference that summer again appointed him as a resident secretary. Immediately after Conference he assumed his familiar, new duties. One of his first tasks was to write the circular letter which was sent to the foreign mission stations following Conference to inform the brethren of any new rules and the state of affairs at home.[45] His rapidly degenerating health confined him to his home and bed during the fall. Although he had papers at home upon which he

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42 Watson, op. cit., p. 484.
43 Ibid., p. 538.
44 Ibid., p. 557.
45 Ibid., pp. 576-77.

tried to work, Watson's active contribution to the cause of missions, which was a part of his own heart-beat for twenty years, was finished.

The value and extent of Watson's efforts for Missions can in no wise be determined by the sermons he preached, the meetings he attended, and the reports he wrote. Indispensable as those activities were, they do not account for the many days he spent in planning for the work, in making decisions related to problems on the field, in expanding the enterprise. For instance, in 1815 while still stationed in Hull, he drew up a plan for a Juvenile Missionary Society in which he urged children "to teach that sacred name you have lisped in your infant prayers to them who never heard it, and by your contributions to increase the number of missionaries who may commend the guide of your youth and the hope of your future years to myriads who wander without a guide and without a God."[46] On April 16, 1816, a Juvenile Society was formed at Leeds,[47] and on May 10th one at City Road, rapidly followed by those at Southwark, Spitalfields Street, George's,[48] and Hackney. As an example of his long range planning, he is accredited with having conceived of a self-supporting Methodist Church of British North America some forty years before it became a reality.[49] Watson always took a personal interest in the missionaries themselves. When he became a resident secretary for the Society, he often had some of the young

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46 Telford, op. cit., p. 65.
47 Ibid., p. 66.
48 Stevenson, op. cit., p. 291.
49 Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 347.

prospective missionaries living with him and his family. He directed his attention toward theological training for them and guided them in a course of reading and study. Among his papers he left notes of lectures which he apparently addressed to them from time to time before their departures for their foreign stations.[50]

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50 Watson, op. cit., p. 354.

C. Watson, the Spokesman of Missions.

Watson was a tireless writer and was constantly called upon to employ his pen on behalf of missions. Some of his work in the form of numerous reports has been mentioned. It is the purpose of this section to disclose three other types of activity in this connexion.

In June of 1816 Barham, M. P., for Stockbridge, in the House of Commons accused the Methodist missionaries in the West Indies of inculcating principles of sedition under the mask of religion, of teaching the slaves to disobey their masters, and of encouraging ideas which led to discontent and insurrection.[1] The Missionary Committee applied to him through one of the General Treasurers, Rev. James Wood, to furnish them with a list of the offending missionaries and incidents in order that the proper action might be taken and the missionaries might be called to account for the offences, since such conduct was in direct opposition to the instructions they had pledged themselves to observe. Barham refused to explain or even to discuss the matter except in the House of Commons. The Committee then approached Butterworth who brought the issue before Parliament. Lord Castlereagh entered his testimony as to the beneficial results of the labors of the Methodist missionaries. Barham confessed himself not prepared to specify the names of offenders or the times

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. I , p. 208.

and places involved. The matter was dropped for the moment at the request of Lord Castlereagh. Barham, however, had a zealous colleague in the form of a Mr. Marryat, also a member of Parliament. Marryat persisted in attacking the character and ministrations of the Methodist missionaries in various pamphlets. The Missionary Committee eventually asked Watson to reply to Marryat on behalf of the mission work. His defence was published in the spring of 1817 under the title, "A Defence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the West Indies: including a refutation of the charge in Mr. Marryat's 'Thoughts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade,' etc., and in other publications: with facts and anecdotes, illustrative of the moral state of the slaves, and of the operation of missions." The pamphlet was extensively read by the members of Parliament, and Wilberforce was reported to have expressed his approbation for it in the strongest terms.[2] It was also reported to have silenced Marryat. Watson received the commendation of his brethren at the following Conference by their unanimously passing this resolution.

> That the warmest thanks of this body are eminently due to Mr. Watson, for his able and triumphant "Defence of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missions in the West Indies," published during the past year, at the request of the Missionary Committee.[3]

The pamphlet easily ranks with Watson's defence of Wesley against Southey as one of his most finished products. He not only vindicated the missionaries and the mission program but also, what may have been of equal or greater importance in

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2 Watson, op. cit., p. 214.
3 Ibid., p. 218.

the long run, presented to the public an account of the condition of the slaves among whom the missionaries labored. Watson can best speak for himself. He regrets that a defence is necessary and adds:

> Let it be remembered, that they (the anti-mission party) have put the Methodist Missions on their trial before the public; . . .that the Methodist Missionaries have borne undeserved reproaches in silence for many years; and that they speak only when it is attempted to blast the fair fruit of their sacrifices and labours, by incitements to persecuting laws, and legislative restriction, uncalled for by a single instance of proved misconduct, and opposed also in the benevolent wishes, and acknowledged interests, of many very respectable colonists themselves.[4]

The facts and statements of his defence are compiled from the evidence made available both by returned missionaries and those still in the field who had answered an extensive questionnaire relating to their work. Watson begins by disclosing the moral conditions existing among the uninstructed slaves, the ignorance, superstition, and sexual promiscuity. He then shows how inadequate the provisions for instructing them has been, the actual hostility from the Colonies and England toward their instruction, and the indifference of the Established Clergy in the islands toward the slaves. A description of Sunday among the slaves offers him an opportunity of demonstrating that, regardless of what is said in the colonies about Christianizing the slaves, everything is done to prevent it. He then describes the labor and treatment of the missionaries; and finally, he examines the charges brought against them. Before concluding

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4 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 431.

he expresses his opinion as to some of the causes for the opposition toward the missionaries.

From one major charge Watson is anxious to exonerate the name of the missionaries, that they preach "seditious doctrines, baneful and pestilent tenets, which endanger the security of the white inhabitants by exciting the negroes to disaffection and revolt."[5] He, too, asks instances and proof from those who make the allegations.

> They are not now urged for the first time; they have been made through almost every successive year of the Mission, without as yet being verified; and if instances more recent and more verifiable have occurred, none are more anxious to be made acquainted with them, than the Managing Committee, under whose direction the Missionaries act.[6]

Since no instances had been offered Watson had asked the missionaries themselves if they knew of any; he records their negative replies. The missionaries, he affirms, are under instructions to "confine their thoughts and efforts solely to the Christian instruction of the negroes, without either defending or opposing the system of slavery, or entering into any civil questions whatever."[7] Rather than being a disruptive and insubordinating influence, the doctrines preached by them tend to have an opposite effect; and he again quotes the missionaries themselves:

> We preach the plain principles of the Christian religion, in the same manner we do in England, only with greater plainness of language; and we advise as many "servants as were under the yoke," to be faithful and diligent, to please their masters in all things, according to St. Paul's directions.[8]

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5 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 490.
6 Ibid., p. 491.
7 Ibid., p. 495.
8 Ibid., p. 496.

In anticipation of those who might claim the previous statements to be merely the missionaries defending themselves, Watson points out two reasons why the charges could not possibly be true. In the first place, the circumstances under which a missionary carries on his work eliminate all opportunities for such seditious preaching. The missionary must labor either in the towns or on the estates. In town the chapels are open to both whites and negroes, and the meetings are held at regularly appointed times. It is, therefore, inconceivable that a man might preach sedition under those conditions without being immediately apprehended.[9] In the case of the plantations, the charge is still more of an absurdity. The missionaries only preach at an estate after obtaining the permission of the owner or his agent. They are received in the homes of those planters with hospitality and kindness, and often use the hall of the master's house as the place of worship.

> Here, then, is a great body of gentlemen, in different islands, whom the opposers of Missions must themselves allow to be persons of respectability and consequence in West Indian society, who, by their leave and sanction, by providing places for their slaves to meet in, and by their contributions to the erection of chapels, and other donations to the missionary cause, have given, for many years, and do still give, their unequivocal denial to the charges of Mr. Marryat and others.[10]

In the second place, the testimony of those who work with the negroes is that the Christian slaves have never taken part in any conspiracy. A Mr. Brownell even confirms that "the religious negroes were entrusted with arms, during the last war, properly

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9 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 498, 499.
10 Ibid., p. 504.

disciplined, and contributed very materially to the preservation of St. Christopher's."[11]

After clearing the names of the missionaries, Watson, in a stirring passage, declares their determination to fulfill their sacred destiny:

> They are not to be deterred by calumnies, nor even menaces, from the prosecution of their work. Conscious of the pureness of their motives, encouraged by success, secure of the countenance of candid men, even in the islands, they will relinquish no station, nor hesitate to embrace every new opportunity which may present itself, for instructing and reforming the ignorant and neglected objects of their Mission. . . Satisfied if they make full proof of their ministry before God and unprejudiced men, and be able to present, as their best epistles of recommendation, thousands of once pagan Africans, living under every kind of vicious habit, now enlightened in the great principles of Christian doctrine, and adorning it in the morality of their lives, and the meekness of their spirits. . . There are calumnies without point, and reproaches without shame; there is a cause which converts censure into praise, and brightens obloquy into glory.[12]

While Watson was a resident Secretary an unfortunate incident occurred which demonstrated the constant danger of persecution in which the missionaries of the West Indies lived. It also affords an illustration of another use to which Watson put his pen in the cause of missions.

In the Report of the Missionary Society for 1819 was this note relating to the revival of work in Barbadoes:

> The revival of the Mission in this island has been followed by the erection of a new and commodious chapel in Bridge Town, toward which several of the principal inhabitants made very liberal donations, and have thereby afforded

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11 Watson, Works, Vol. VI. p. 502.
12 Ibid., p. 529.

> additional refutation to the calumny for some time circulated, that the insurrection in that island was occasioned by the influence of religion upon the slaves.[13]

When Watson wrote that, he had no idea of what lay ahead for the station on that island. The seeds which were planted grew, so that the District Meeting for Barbadoes could report to the London Committee in the fall of 1823, "We are warranted to expect with confidence a gradual and steady increase of members in the coming year."[14] Within a short time of that report, on the night of October 19th and 20th of 1823, a mob of whites assembled and spent the better part of the night destroying the chapel and the missionary's house. Axes and hammers were taken to the furniture. The library, consisting of over 300 volumes, of the missionary, Mr. Shrewsbury, was demolished; and he himself escaped only by flight.[15] Another passage from the Missionary Report for 1823, which was published in the spring of 1824, attests the patience and determination with which the work was continued even after the outrage:

> Small as our Society is in this colony, and limited as is its influence, we may state it as proof of singular liberality in the cause of Missions, that the Missionary Society organized there, contributed during last year, to our General Fund, near 100 pounds stirling; 50 pounds of which have been remitted since the destruction of the Chapel, and the suppression of their assemblies.[16]

The news, of course, created much consternation when

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13 Report of Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society, 1819, p. 61.
14 Ibid., 1823, p. 54. Quoting Mr. Goy, Missionary.
15 Watson, Works, Vol. I, pp. 378-79.
16 Report of Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society, 1823, p. 57.

it reached England. On June 23, 1824, Buxton introduced the matter on the floor of the House of Commons and was supported by William Smith, Butterworth, Brougham, and Lushington. Eventually, a motion by Canning was passed declaring that "in the conduct of Mr. Shrewsbury it was impossible to find any cause for blame whatever," and reprimanding the conduct of the rioters in the most unqualified terms.[17] Such action could not restore the damage, however. During the spring and summer the committee requested Watson to apply his pen to the correspondence with the government by which they hoped to obtain restitution for some of the loss. Apparently the committee sent a memorial to Lord Bathurst on March 10th, after having spoken to him on March 5th. On April 5th Lord Bathurst replied, through Wilmot Horton, that he would recommend the matter to the Lords of the Treasury. When the committee heard no further word, it requested Watson to write his Lordship. Watson's correspondence is included as an illustration of his manner in handling such matters. These three letters have not been published previously.

June 26th, 1824

Rt. Hon. Earl Bathurst

My Lord,

I am directed by the Committee of the Wesleyan Missionary Society to request the honor of being informed by your Lordship what may have been the decision of your Lordship, on the Memorial from the Committee, to your Lordship, dated March 10, '24, praying his Majesty's Government to take the case of the loss of property, which the Missionary Society for whom they act, had sustained by the late demolition of the Chapel and Missionary's dwelling house in Bridge Town, Barbadoes, and the destruction of the household furniture

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17 Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 410.

and of Mr. Shrewsbury's library. The particulars of that loss, and the reasons on which the Committee made that application were set forth in that Memorial; and as your Lordship wished the answer to be delayed till the arrival of the next dispatches from the Governor of Barbadoes, the Committee have not till now renewed their application. Presuming that those dispatches have arrived, they beg leave humbly again to request your Lordship's attention to the case. I have the honor to be My Lord

Your Lordship's
Most Obedient and Humble Servant
Richard Watson

The contents of the other letters need no commentary.

July 8, 1824

To R. J. Wilmot Horton, Esqr.
Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th instant, and to reply, that when the deputation from the Committee of our Missionary Society waited upon Lord Bathurst on the 5th of March last on the subject of the destruction of the premises of the Wesleyan Mission in Barbadoes, they understood his Lordship to say that after the next dispatches from the Governor of Barbadoes should arrive, he would kindly forward our Memorial on the case to the Lords of the Treasury, with his favorable recommendation, and further condescend to inform the Committee of their decision. In the last particular, we probably misunderstood his Lordship, and were not authorized to expect more from his Lordship, than the information, that the memorial had been so recommended, which was obligingly communicated to us by your letter of the 5th April, last. If the deputation thus misapprehended his Lordship I conclude that our course is without further trouble to his Lordship, to make our application to the Treasury to ascertain the final decision of his Majesty's Government on the Committees memorial of the 10th March, and I am directed by the Committee to express through you to his Lordship, their thankful acknowledgement for his obliging attention to the case.

I have the honor to be,etc.
Rd. Watson

July 12, 1824

To the Lords Commissioners
of his Majesty's Treasury
My Lords,

I am directed by the Committee of the Wesleyan

Missionary Society humbly to represent to your Lordships, that on the 10th of March last, the said Committee addressed a Memorial to the Rt. Hon. ble Earl Bathurst, his Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, stating the total destruction of the Society's Mission Chapel, and Dwelling House at Bridge Town, Barbadoes, together with the furniture of the latter, and a great part of Mr. Shrewsbury's Library by a mob, on the 19th and 20th of October, 1823; that in this Memorial, they stated to his Lordship, that this outrage was entirely unprovoked on the part of the Society, or its agent there; and that no interruption was given to the proceedings of the rioters by the authorities of the Island military or civil on either of the two evenings on which the mob assembled; they also stated the amount of the loss sustained by the Society, and prayed his Majesty's Government to take the case into their consideration, and to afford indemnification to the Society, to the amount of the value of the property destroyed, in order to enable the Committee to rebuild the premises and to re-establish their Mission.

His Lordship was pleased to reply to this Memorial on the 5th of April last, and to acquaint the Committee that the said Memorial had been referred to your Lordships "favourable consideration."

The Committee now direct me humbly to solicit your Lordships attention to the Memorial thus favourably recommended by Lord Bathurst, to your Lordships consideration, and that they may be informed of the decision of your Lordships on the case, as soon as it shall be consistent with your Lordships convenience.

I have the honour to be
My Lords,
your Lordships most
Obedient and humble Servant
R. Watson

Watson further drew up the following resolution which was unanimously adopted by the Conference that summer:

The most cordial and respectful thanks of the Conference shall be presented to Thomas Fowell Buxton, Esq., M. P., for the very able and liberal manner in which he brought forward the case of Mr. Shrewsbury, and the outrages committed against the Wesleyan Mission in Barbadoes, in the House of Commons, on the 23rd of June; from which has resulted, not only the indignant con-

> demnation of those outrages by Parliament, but also a declaration of its determination to concur with His Majesty in any measures which may be necessary for the prevention of similar proceedings, and to secure the full benefit of religious toleration to all His Majesty's subjects in the West Indies.[18]

Similar resolutions were passed to Messrs. Butterworth, Smith, Brougham, and Lushington.

Still another example of Watson's use of his pen in the cause of missions is in the correspondence which traveled continually between himself and men on the field. Brailsford truthfully said of him that "in his relationship with the missionaries in the field the brotherliness of his nature revealed itself. He knew them all, and the vineyards in which they toiled were ever before his eye. Their names and needs were on the breastplate of his daily intercession."[19] To the young men he sent words of advice[20] as in the case previously quoted of Robert Young in Jamaica,[21] or in another instance of William Bridgnell in Ceylon.[22] He discusses their health, their stations, finances, plans for future expansion. He praises and censures, encourages and urges. His last letters to missionaries were written in the fall of 1832, only weeks before his death. Some of them not previously published are included as Appendix B at the end of this volume. They serve to illustrate his activity for missions which continued as long as he had strength to labor.

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18 Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 413.
19 E. J. Brailsford, Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate, p. 73.
20 See page 93.
21 Watson, Works, Vol. I, pp. 339-40.
22 Ibid., pp. 406-407.

D. Evaluation.

The relation between Watson and missions was reciprocal. To him is due, in no small measure, the credit of helping to establish the missionary program on a firm foundation, to diffuse a passion for its progress throughout British Methodism, and to make it a popular cause. Missions, on the other hand, helped to make Watson. The work called forth the highest and the best of his mind and spirit. Assessing the importance of Watson's personal contribution to the movement is made the more difficult by the fact that it was a movement, an idea whose time had come.

The records of the advances of the mission program during the years in which he was associated with it stand in sharp contrast to the records of his pastoral ministry. One must constantly remember, however, that Watson was not alone in the work; but it may be fairly said that no one gave of himself so completely in the work from 1813 until 1833 as did he. In 1812, the year before the Leeds Meeting, Coke reported approximately 13,500 members in the mission fields. The collections for that year amounted to 4,688 pounds, 10 shillings, 4 pence, as opposed to disbursements totaling 7,577 pounds, 12 shillings, and 3 pence. Since the program already owed a balance on the account of 1808 of 4 pounds, 3 shillings, and 1 pence, and on that of 1811 of 1,296 pounds, 9 shillings, it closed the year 1812 with an indebtedness of 4,189 pounds, 14 shillings. In the first

full year following the Leeds Meeting, the income to the Mission Fund more than doubled to 10,285 pounds, 9 shillings, and 10 pence; and the debt was lowered to 1,892 pounds, 19 shillings, 10 pence. Robert Smith, the Secretary of the London Committee, could well write in the Report for that year:

> Indeed, the recent benevolent exertions of our Friends, in the cause of Missions, fully assure us of their willingness to be workers together with God, in the diffusion of divine truth. . . The piety, zeal, and liberality of these Societies is unparalleled; and we anticipate the pleasure of announcing in our next Report, that through the assistance of these Societies, we shall have the means of sending other Missionaries to those dark parts of the earth that have not yet been favored with the light of the Gospel.[1]

After having been a secretary to the work for two years Watson produced the first Report of the General Missionary Society in 1818. The figures are revealing. Eighty-three foreign stations having a membership of almost 23,000 were reported as being served by 103 missionaries. Nearly 20,500 pounds were collected for the year. A glance at the itemized list of donations indicates the power and imagination with which Watson and his colleagues were presenting the cause to the people. Over twelve pounds are reported from the sale of rings, watches, seals, etc., which were given at meetings. A small sum is reported from Missionary boxes placed on board the ships Venus and Diligence. Another interesting item in the Report for the year offers an indication of the spread and work of the Juvenile Missionary Societies for which Watson had drawn up the plan in 1815 while in Hull. One may be sure he had a hand in the formation of the

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1 Annual Report on the State of Missions, 1814, p. 22.

Society for that Circuit, which in 1818 led in forwarding over seventy pounds to the Missionary Treasurer. The Juvenile Societies, fifteen in number, reported a total collection of over 244 pounds for the year. Watson had harnessed the youth.

To examine all the reports of the years in which he was directly associated with the work would serve no special purpose; a comparison of some of the figures, however, is important as an aid to evaluating his efforts. Watson was a resident secretary from 1821 to 1827 inclusive. During that time the number of foreign stations increased from 108 to 137, the number of missionaries from 148 to 182, the members served by those missionaries from 28,699 to 33,152. By 1826 the annual income had surpassed 49,000 pounds, although it was slightly less in that particular year. There can be no doubt that the years of Watson's activities for missions were eminently successful for the cause.

Although Watson was not alone in the mission work, he reached a pre-eminent position in the eyes of his contemporaries who appreciated and praised his exertions for the cause. Upon his death the Methodist Magazine said:

> His Missionary sermons will never be forgotten while the present generation of Methodists exist, nor will the impression produced by them ever be effaced. They were unquestionably among the most extraordinary examples of sanctified genius and intellect ever exhibited in the Christian pulpit; displaying such a yearning pity for the perishing heathen, such zeal for the rights and honour of Christ, such faith in the efficacy of the Gospel when applied by the power of the Holy Ghost, as were perfectly irresistible. Conviction seemed to flash upon every mind; and contributions were presented, unexampled in their liberality, attended

> by fervent prayers for the success of the good work.[2]

He was known for his affection for the missionaries, for his attempts to secure prompt attention to their needs and wants, and for his thorough knowledge and understanding of each foreign station and its respective problems.[3] The decision of his judgment was relied upon in matters relating to the work. Marsden, once his colleague as a resident secretary, confessed:

> Frequently have I admired the accuracy of his judgment in suggesting the stations to which the temper, habits, talents, and acquirements of Missionary candidates were adapted. When 6 or 8 young men have been examined and approved by the Committee, after being duly recommended by their respective Circuits and District-Meetings, it has been a question of no ordinary moment, both with regard to themselves, and the work in which they were to be employed, in what particular parts of the Mission field they should be respectively appointed to labour. In such cases I have almost invariably found that we might safely rely on Mr. Watson's judgment.[4]

The historians of Methodism, with the clarity of vision afforded by hindsight, have universally recognized Watson's contribution in this field. Stevens referred to him as "an eloquent advocate and chief manager of its (Wesleyan Methodism's) missions, directing their foreign operations, defending them by his pen, and commanding for them the respect and patronage of the British people."[5] Telford attributed the

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2 Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, February, 1833, p. 149.
3 Compiled, Life of Rev. Richard Watson, p. 294.
4 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writing of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 230.
5 Abel Stevens, A History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century Called Methodism, p. 55.

success of the movement largely to Bunting's genius as an administrator and Watson's glorious gifts of mind and heart.[6] His opinion is extended in the following evaluation:

> It is not too much to say that Watson took up the torch when Coke dropped it. . . He reached his highest level of devotion and effectiveness in his service to foreign missions. . . From Watson, in the greatest measure from any one man, came the inspiration, the self-communicating grace and pity that spread throughout the church. Not only did he write the circular to the societies which stirred up branch organizations everywhere, but year after year his ardour inflamed all with whom he could come into contact by voice or pen.[7]

Without a doubt the Leeds Meeting opened a door in Watson's life and gave his spirit freedom in its own congenial atmosphere. Every talent, every facet of his nature seems to have been fashioned for the challenge. His deep concern for the souls of men which stands out in his theological works as well as sermons came to its maturity in his broad vision of Christ's work for the salvation of all men. The very depth of his conviction would not allow him to stand idle while thousands had never heard of Christ. Watson thought in terms of big ideas as is demonstrated by the lofty themes of his preaching, and the major emphasis of his Theological Institutes. The very vastness of the dream of world missions vibrated in harmony with the pulse-beat of his own soul. His preaching had the power to make others see the dream as he saw it, to make them feel at one with

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6 John Telford, A Short History of the Wesleyan Methodist Foreign Missions, p. 65.

7 W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, George Eayers, A New History of Methodism, Vol. I, pp. 398-99.

God's purposes, to inspire them with the dauntless faith in the success of the venture which pervaded his own spirit. In truth, Watson "took the torch" of missions from Coke. Although he never left the British Isles, he fashioned the pattern of missionary activities; he, more than any other, placed the cause on the heart of the British Methodists and defended it when necessary. In this respect Watson rendered his greatest service to his church and to posterity. One begins to appreciate the full stature of the man when he realizes that he was the leading figure in what was one of the most creative and far-reaching movements in British Methodism in the nineteenth century. The following passage by Watson seems best of all to capture his spirit:

> But, says one, "Suppose you fail in this work:" And, Sir, were we to fail, it would still be more glorious and honourable to attempt, than, with some sober-minded person, to fold our arms, and suffer perishing myriads to cry for help in vain. We will go farther. Perhaps in some of our objects we shall fail. We neither promise ourselves nor others all the success we hope. Duty is ours; events belong to God. The Divine Being seldom accomplishes even our own purposes in our own way. His wish is not to be directed by human views; and he works out His plan by our disappointment, that no flesh may glory in his presence. But though we may fail in particular purposes, we cannot fail in the general result. Our labours, though not connected with the divine plan in our own way, are yet connected with them. We can do nothing in vain. Everything must have its effect; and, though unseen to us, must prosper. Our attempts may seem sometimes to be lost; and we ought to prepare ourselves for such disappointments; but they will be lost only as some streams are lost in the earth. They run on their course invisibly, till they unexpectedly break forth again into day, and give verdure to the fields.
>
> I conclude, Sir, with expressing my confidence, that when the veil of mortality is withdrawn, and the value of immortal souls shall be more clearly

> demonstrated than can be done in this present state, when the realities of heaven and hell shall appear unshaded before us, not the most zealous among us, no, not the Missionary himself, who wears out health and life in his work, will think he has done too much to promote the salvation of the souls of men.[8]

Truly, Watson's own life ran like a stream through his own day preparing and making green the field of missions; and though his body is lost in the earth, his spirit and influence, perhaps unrealized, still "breaks forth again into day, and gives verdure to the fields."

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8 Watson, Works, Vol. 1, pp. 152-53.

CHAPTER 3

FIGHTER AGAINST SLAVERY

A. Activities.

The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 secured for England the rights to the slave trade between Africa and America. In the succeeding ninety-four years it is estimated that three and a half million negroes were transported to America under the British flag.[1] If the trade had continued on into the period of commercial exploitation of the tropics, Africa would have been turned into the world's slave farm, the results of which could only have been the corruption and destruction of Europe itself.[2] Fortunately for the slaves and the world, the matter weighed so heavily on the heart of William Wilberforce that he dedicated his life to the abolition of the practice. Although he was not alone in the battle, his inspiration and efforts initiated and followed through to success the first stage of the fight against it. In 1807 the slave trade was abolished, but the owning of slaves was still practised. The aging Wilberforce committed to Fowell Buxton in 1821 the parliamentary task of completing the job thus begun. On the night of the 31st of July, thirteen years later, all slaves in British colonies were set free.

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1 G. G. Findlay and W. W. Holdsworth, The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Vol. 1, p. 24.

2 G. M. Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century, p. 51.

It was inevitable that Methodism should play a part in the effort to free the slaves. John Wesley's opposition to the practice of slavery was well known. The writing of a letter to Wilberforce on the matter constituted one of the last acts of that great man. Furthermore, the beginning of Methodist mission work among the slaves in the West Indies around 1760 placed the body into a direct contact with the institution. Methodist missionaries became the friends and pastors to thousands of slaves. They knew the slaves as human beings; they knew the conditions under which they lived. Edwards says that in the three periods of the struggle against slavery Methodism produced three great champions.[3] In the first period, Wesley exerted his influence for abolition. In the second, Thomas Coke took up the cause. Through Coke's influence, the Conference of 1807 determined that no missionary in the West Indies should be at liberty to marry any person who had not previously, by legal methods, emancipated all slaves they possessed; also, it required all preachers who had acquired slaves by marriage or any other means to take immediate action for their liberation.[4] In the last period, the final struggle to free the slaves, Methodism's leader was Richard Watson. Through his missionary activities he labored incessantly for the instruction as well as the emancipation of the slaves. At Watson's death, Bunting testified that he had acquired "a place in the highest and foremost rank of British Philanthropists, as the eloquent and triumphant advocate of the

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3 Maldwyn Edwards, After Wesley, p. 69.
4 Ibid., p. 70.

necessity, the obligation, and the benefit of the Christian Missions established in those colonies for the conversion of the slaves."[5] The degree to which the Methodist conscience had been moved on the question is seen in the fact that two-thirds of the Nonconformist signatures to petitions which were drawn up in favor of emancipation prior to its becoming a law in 1833 were Methodist.[6] The purpose of this chapter is to relate and evaluate the part Watson played in this last stage of the battle for abolition.

A. Activities.

As early as 1814 Watson became vocal against slavery. In his sermon of thanksgiving for the peace of that year he looks forward to the day when the task begun in 1807, by the abolition of the slave traffic in British ships, shall be made universal, and says:

> We doubt not but the spirit manifested and sustained in Great Britain on this subject will eventually remove this reproach from Christendom, and proclaim an eternal jubilee to the continent of Africa.[7]

His next three years association with the missionaries of the West Indies made him more familiar with the issue and its problems, the relations between the planters and missionary activities, between the planters and the slaves, and between the

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5 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," pp. 41-42.

6 W. J. Townsend, B. B. Workman, and George Eayers, A New History of Methodism, Vol. I, p. 399.

7 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. II, Ser. II, "Thanksgiving for Peace," p. 31.

slaves and the missionaries. He emerged from those three years with three convictions: a keen sense of the injustice of the institution, the conviction that the majority of the planters did not want their slaves instructed in Christianity in spite of the moral condition of the slaves, and the certainty that the only hope for bettering the conditions of the slaves lay in emancipation rather than mitigation.

Watson was thrust into the public spotlight by his "Defence of the Methodist Missions in the West Indies" in 1817. Whereas the defence of the missionaries from the calumnies of slaveholders constituted the primary purpose of the pamphlet, he rendered as great, if not greater, service to the cause of abolition by his exposé of the moral and living conditions of the slaves. If they were to be helped, British public opinion had to be swayed on their behalf; and Watson's pamphlet served to present the matter in its true light to the public. Wilberforce is reported to have acknowledged its contribution.[8] Watson also attracted the notice of Zachary Macaulay during that year; for on May 31, 1817, Macaulay wrote to Hannah More:

> Our great meetings this year have certainly been better conducted than I have known them. . . Watson, the Wesleyan Methodist, spoke with singular delicacy and feeling, and to a degree of good taste that would have done credit even to such a man as Reginald Heber. He is certainly both an able and an honest man. . .[9]

Early in 1823, the "London Society for Mitigating and

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8 John Telford, A Short History of Wesleyan Methodist Foreign Missions, p. 101.

9 Edwards, op. cit., p. 71.

Gradually Abolishing the State of Slavery throughout the British Dominions" was formed. Both Watson and Bunting were invited to attend and to unite their efforts with those of the body.[10] Soon after its formation, Bunting joined the group; Watson, however, hesitated. Since he was then a resident Secretary of missions, he desired to take no step which might place the missionaries and congregations in the West Indies in a difficult situation. He waited, therefore, until he could be sure of the nature and purposes of the organization. When these words appeared in the first annual Report of the Society, "Nothing can justify the making one man a slave, or even the retention of one man in slavery longer than the real benefit of the slave himself, viewed in all his circumstances and relations, may require," he readily concurred and committed himself to their program.[11]

In February of 1824 the hopes of the anti-slavery movement were at a low ebb when Buxton wrote to a friend:

> The slavery question looks wretchedly. I begin to think that opposed as we are by the West Indians, deserted by government, and deemed enthusiastic by the public, we shall be able to do little or nothing; however, I rejoice that we have tried.[12]

Perhaps they fell even lower because of the Barbadoes and Demerara incidents of the preceding fall which have been previously mentioned. Undoubtedly, however, in the long run, those incidents were the beginning of the final encounter which defeated slavery; for because of them, the public began to become "enthusiastic"

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10 T. P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, D.D., Vol. II, p. 202.

11 Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 399.

12 Charles Buxton, Memoirs of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, p. 143.

itself and to realize the problems created by slavery as well as its injustice. When the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's annual meeting was held at City Road that spring, the committee requested Watson to preach. He complied with a sermon from the text, "Honour all men,"[13] which was later published under the title, "The Religious Instruction of the slaves of the West India Colonies advocated and defended."[14] All of Watson's experience, power of thought, and passionate concern for both missions and slaves came into focus in that sermon producing an effect which received note from many quarters. A member of Parliament who accompanied Butterworth to the meeting is reported to have said while returning from it, "The sermon was the greatest display of intellectual strength in a public speaker I ever heard. I have perhaps sometimes witnessed an equal degree of power for a short period; but an extemporary address of two hours' length, delivered with such unabated energy of thought and feeling, never before came under my observation."[15] The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine deviated from its usual practice of not reviewing single sermons, because of the "intrinsic excellence of the Discourse" and "the importance of the subject which it treats," in order to assure its readers that the message was a public expression of the opinions entertained on the subject by the body of Christians to which Watson belonged.[16] The

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13 I Peter 2:17.

14 G. J. Stevenson, City Road Chapel, London, and Its Associations, p. 298.

15 Watson, Works, Vol. 1, p. 390.

16 The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, October, 1824, p. 687.

Christian Guardian, a magazine with which Watson sometimes took issue, admitted that the sermon was a "masterly production" and one deserving of the "highest praise."[17] Even the Christian Observer, an organ of the Church of England, had nothing but praise for it:

> It is so ably and attractively written, and is so full of important information, and of able and conclusive reasoning, on a subject still but imperfectly understood, that, if we followed our own inclinations, we should transcribe the whole of it into our pages. We should be glad to put it into the hands of every individual in the kingdom; and we trust that the Society before whom it was preached, and whose cause it so powerfully advocates, will be sufficiently alive to their own interest or rather the interest of universal humanity, to cause a copy of it to be laid, during the present recess, on the table of every member of both houses of Parliament.[18]

The sermon demonstrates what might be said to be a characteristic of Watson. Although he did not obstreporously keep himself in the public eye but performed his duties quietly and as efficiently as he knew how, when demanding situations arose, such as the publication of Southey's Life of Wesley, or the Marryat incident, or the Barbadoes issue, he stood at his full stature; and his greatness met the need.

By the time the Conference met in 1825 Methodist opinion had become unified against slavery; and the following declaration, drafted by Watson, was approved:

> Nothing is more contrary to the writings of our venerable Founder, and to the views which our societies in general maintain to this day, than the

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17 The Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine, Vol. XVI, Dec., 1824, p. 498.
18 The Christian Observer, Sept., 1824, p. 563.

> notion that it is in any sense consistent with the spirit or the laws of Christianity, to enslave our fellowmen, or to retain them in interminable bondage. The slavery of the negroes this Conference considers to be one of the most heinous of our public offences; the principle of which it becomes us as a nation instantly and heartily to renounce; and the practice of which we are equally bound to discontinue, as speedily as a prudent and benevolent regard to the interest of those who are the subjects of this oppression will permit.[19]

Along with his other work during the next five years, Watson remained in contact with the Anti-Slavery Society. One may be sure that wherever he spoke for missions, he also spread his influence against slavery; for the two were part of one issue in the West Indies. In the May of 1830 he wrote to Bunting, "The intention of the Anti-Slavery Committee is to get simultaneous petitions against the opening of the next session."[20] Accordingly, at the Conference Watson proposed six resolutions which were cordially adopted. Four of them are of particular interest as indicative of the advance in public opinion on the matter. The second disdains the use of generalities and clearly condemns conditions in the West Indies as being marked "with characters of peculiar severity and injustice." In the fourth, ministers are urged to exhort the members of the societies to join with others in presenting petitions to the next Parliament. The fifth makes clear that the petitions are not to be for a half-way measure but for the "speedy and universal abolition" of the practice. The sixth, in an unprecedented request, urges

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19 Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 414.
20 T. P. Bunting, op. cit., p. 266.

the Methodists who have the elective franchise to "give their influence and votes only to those candidates who pledge themselves to support, in Parliament, the most effectual measures for the entire abolition of slavery throughout the colonies of the British empire."[21] A copy of the resolutions was forwarded to Wilberforce, and his grateful acknowledgment of them was later read in the Conference.[22] In accordance with the resolutions Watson had sermons preached against slavery in every chapel in the City Road Circuit. For the purpose of presenting the petition, a special week night service was held at City Road at which the subject was explained and spoken to by Watson, Dixon, and Galland.[23]

In the spring of 1831, a dissolution of Parliament and a general election were anticipated. The Anti-Slavery Society, ever anxious to take advantage of an opportunity, called a meeting at Exeter Hall on the 23rd of April for the purpose of presenting the cause to the people before elections. Intense interest preceded the meeting. Addresses were delivered by Watson, who was then a member of the Committee of the Society, Buxton, Sir James Mackintosh, Dr. Lushington, and many others.[24] On other occasions Watson had been invited to address public meetings of the Society but had been prevented. As it was, he was ill when he mounted the platform on this evening. In the elections which followed, Watson did not disdain to employ his influence.

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21 Watson, Works, Vol. 1, pp. 512-514.
22 B. Gregory, Sidelights on Conflicts of Methodism, p. 94.
23 Stevenson, op. cit., p. 198.
24 Watson, Works, Vol. 1, p. 527.

As a result of the elections only eleven proprietors of slaves were returned to the House of Commons; and a number of candidates were elected on their pledge to vote for abolition.[25] The nation had at last been aroused to action. When the Conference met in 1832, it lodged its last protest against slavery in the form of resolutions drawn up by Watson.[26] Watson himself took an active part in the debates and, thus, closed his Conference career in the moment when victory was assured but not won. Even after Conference he continued working for the slaves as long as breath was in him. Wesley, as a last act, had written a letter to Wilberforce against slavery. In a striking parallel, Watson, from his death bed, wrote his last letter in reply to one from Buxton who had sought his advice on the same matter.

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25 Watson, Works, Vol. 1, p. 592.
26 Gregory, op. cit., p. 126.

B. Writings and evaluation.

Brailsford said of Watson, "It was when speaking on behalf of the slaves that Watson reached the highest level of platform eloquence, and his historical knowledge, moral indignation, and glowing imagination found their fullest expression."[1] Although his voice and pen were not the only ones of the Wesleyan Methodist communion dedicated on behalf of the slaves, his devotion and effectiveness at the task marked him as the foremost among his brethren. His evangelical, missionary ardor heated by righteous indignation over a moral wrong perpetrated on a defenceless people kindled a passion in his own soul which he, to a remarkable degree, communicated to others. After having examined his activities on behalf of the slaves, one might ask, "But what was his message which had so much influence in swaying the Methodist people and moulding them into a solid front against slavery?" From the platform and by his pen Watson directed his campaign against slavery along five lines. Firstly, year in and year out he lifted before the people a picture of the existence led by slaves, of the conditions under which they lived. Secondly, he attempted to quicken the consciences of people by an appeal to their sense of justice. Thirdly, in the hearts of Methodists he awakened the sense of the Christian conscience, the realization of a responsibility toward God's down-

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1 E. J. Brailsford, Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate, p. 96.

trodden and uninstructed children. Fourthly, he pointed to the successes which had already been gained for Christ among the slaves as an assurance of what might be done if they were free and if the missionaries were given complete liberty to work among them. Fifthly, in a less public fashion he made known what he considered to be the best means of accomplishing abolition peacefully and in the manner best for the slaves. It is, therefore, the purpose of this section to examine these main facets of his thought which exerted so great an influence and, further, to evaluate his efforts for the cause of the slaves.

Paul never proclaimed a more certain truth than that God always works for good with those who love him. He who was able to make the cross, a symbol of man's cruelty, to become a symbol of His love was also able to fashion of man's injustice an instrument of mercy. Though it may not have seemed so at the time, the hardships and persecutions suffered by the missionaries of the West Indies at the hands of unscrupulous planters became an important stimulus to the abolition of slavery. Conditions in the West Indies might have continued for years causing little notice in England had all the plantation owners allowed the missionaries to work peaceably among the slaves. As it was, they were denied that right, and their cause was taken up in England and presented to the people. The presentation of the cause of the missionaries hastened the presentation of the cause of the slaves. Watson's first major contribution was the dissemination of information concerning the moral and working conditions of the slaves as they were described to him by the missionaries. Most Methodists learned for the first time the degrading, superstitious

nature of the negro religion from Watson, who described it in his "Defence of Missions":

> They tremble not before God, but before demons; whilst their belief in witchcraft gives every man, more artful than his fellow-savages, the opportunity of gratifying his malice or his avarice, and brings the mind of the multitude under the bondage of fears, which often embitter and waste existence; and, in all cases, break the tone, and debase and corrupt the feelings of the mind.[2]

The state of morals, among the uninstructed slaves, he pointed out, was lax and practically nonexistent. Marriage, for instance, was the exception to the rule, as the institution existed only among the Christian slaves.[3] Another fact which the people at home perhaps did not realize was that the slaves were not allowed a Sabbath rest in the islands. He contrasted the white service of worship on Sunday with the labor of the slave:

> Whilst that service is performed which contains prayers for "all conditions of men," those scriptures read which hold out the benefits of a "common salvation," without distinction, to every kindred, tongue, and people; and that law pronounced which enjoins that the servant, as well as the master, shall, on the Sabbath-day, be exonerated from labour, and to which law the worshippers pray their hearts may be "inclined;" the slave is at his toil, under the lash of his driver; he is working his ground for maintenance, or employed in carrying its fruits to market; where, after he has disposed of them, he spends the remainder of the day, if he be not too far from home, in dancing, drinking, and every kind of riot, in company with his fellow savages.[4]

Under these circumstances the missionaries had access to the slaves only in the broken moments of their free time. Although

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2 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, "Defence of Missions," p. 433.
3 Ibid., p. 438.
4 Ibid., pp. 458-59.

their Christian charity might cry out in protest against the evil and the inhumanity of the practice, the missionaries could say and do little to change it since the slaves had no rights. In short, the picture painted by Watson is that of ignorant and neglected negroes; but he concludes, "That it continues his character, is less his fault than the crime of those who, by commanding him to remain ignorant, have commanded him to remain vicious, and whose example has not always been a corrective influence."[5]

Besides informing the public of the condition of the negroes in slavery, Watson appealed to the purely secular sense of justice on their behalf. In an unpublished speech he said, "I have indeed spoken of conscience, and I think, Sir, not without good reason, for the great subject before us is not one of expediency, not one of policy, not one of mere prudence; it is, if I view it right, a question of justice, of eternal and all commanding justice."[6] He argued that if it had been wrong to enslave negroes, as Parliament had decided in 1807, it was also wrong to keep them in a hopeless bondage.[7] The fact that the act was being perpetrated on those who were born as British subjects heightened the injustice. In words far more radical than Watson's conservative nature generally permitted him to use he spoke of the negro's birthright to freedom:

> Of this right there can be no question. If he is free by nature, and free by the right and

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5 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 437.
6 Printed in Appendix C.
7 Watson, Works, Vol. 1, p. 519.

> privilege of being born a British Subject, and I take it, that freedom is as much their birthright as it is ours, for what have they done to forfeit it? It is I repeat an act of injustice not on the part of their owners alone, for I lose sight of them, but an act of injustice on the part of the nation.[8]

Only upon certain conditions can one's birthright to freedom and liberty be forfeited, as in the case of criminals and prisoners of war. The negros were not taken in any honorable conquest, however; nor were they found guilty of crime. He continued, "They were kidnapped and stolen, and no more right can be established in them than in any other stolen property."[9] If such a plight on the part of British subjects had existed within the bounds of England, Watson was sure the people would have been horrified and would have lost no time in relieving the situation. He earnestly pleaded with them to remember that the West Indies, no less than the counties of England, were portions of the British empire, and its inhabitants equally due their share of justice.[10]

In what seems now to have been a curious blind spot in Watson's thinking, he did not conclude that the principle of slavery as such was wrong. When his objectors pointed out that slavery was accepted and practiced by the Patriarchs and Jews of the Old Testament, he sought to defend it in a speech delivered at City Road in 1830.[11] He found Old Testament slavery justifiable because it was impartial and lacked the injustice

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8 Appendix C
9 Loc. cit.
10 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 425.
11 Watson, Works, Vol. I, pp. 520ff.

which characterized the bondage of the negros in the West Indies. If a man were taken captive in war or became insolvent and were sold in lieu of his debt, no injustice had been performed. Watson's attitude, in this respect, is the result of his view of Scripture; whereby, the Bible is the infallible word of God, dictated, even as to the choice of words, by the Holy Spirit to man. He, therefore, chose to defend it by an artificial distinction between slavery and slavery.

Watson sought not only to point out the injustice of slavery but also to quicken the consciences of Christian folk to their duty and responsibility to slaves. The slave, he affirmed, was as much a child of God for whom Christ was an Advocate as any man.[12] In Watson's day, there were those who denied that the negro was a human being on the same level with white men and assigned to him a stage lower than man in the gradual development of animated nature. For such an idea, Watson had only disdain. He pointed to the success of the mission program in taking the native patience of the negros and exalting it into charity as assurance that they were human souls for whom Christ died and who were subject to the truths of the gospel. This fact, plus their servile condition, only made the burden of responsibility greater for their instruction and care.

> This condition of servitude has rendered our neglect, in not instructing the negro population of the colonies in the principles of religion, the more criminal, because it has taken away the ground of every excuse which may be made for the

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12 Watson, Works, Vol. II, Sermon V, "Instruction of Slaves," p. 89.

ommission of so obvious a duty.[13]

As interested as Christian people were in the instruction of the slaves, however, they could not simply rest with instructing them. Christianity is hostile to the whole system of slavery. To be exact, Watson said, referring to the system of slavery, "It is enough to know that the principles of Christianity are opposed to it."[14] No inconsistency presented itself to him between this statement and his attitude toward the Biblical slavery. He continued his argument by saying that those who professed Christianity were bound by its principles; therefore, the Christian must oppose slavery. In his opposition, however, the Christian "will not snap the chains of the slave, but will melt them."[15]

Much of the trouble toward missions in the West Indies had been caused by those who claimed that the missionaries' preaching had a seditious effect upon the negros. In order to counteract the idea Watson said:

> As the Methodist Missionaries have been instructed to confine their thoughts and efforts solely to the Christian instruction of the negroes, without either defending or opposing the system of slavery, or entering into any civil question whatsoever, so they have fulfilled their trust; and instead of promoting insubordination, and feelings of enmity towards the whites, the doctrines they have constantly preached have had an effect directly opposite.[16]

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13 Watson, Works, Vol. II, Sermon V, "Instruction of Slaves," p. 99.

14 Watson, Works, Vol. I, p. 523.

15 G. J. Stevenson, City Road Chapel, London, and its Associations, p. 566.

16 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 495.

Of the actual results of Christianity on the slaves, Watson named five. First, a beginning had been made in the communication to them of Christian knowledge in the mission schools and societies. Speaking of religious truths, he said:

> Adults throughout the islands listen to them from the pulpit, meditate on them at their labours, talk of them in the hut, sing them in hymns, and, in admonitory advices, commend them to their children. The light has not fully dissipated the darkness; but that day has broken which never more shall close.[17]

Second, the introduction of Christianity had borne as its fruit an increase of morality, which brought in its train improved character, better health, temperance. While the whites accused the missionary of arousing insubordination, the facts showed that in over forty years no slave who was a member of one of the societies had either been a conspirator, a rebel, or an insubordinate. Watson explained that they had been taught the obedience enjoined by the gospel.[18] The introduction of Christian worship, he named third as one of the foundations of a new and better life for the slaves.[19] Fourth, and one of the most important, was the effect of Christianity on their domestic habits. Before the missionaries introduced the institution, marriage was practically unknown. In 1824 Watson said:

> About 20,000 negroes in the Wesleyan societies alone, are now living in this "holy state of matrimony;" and within about 4 years, 4,000 marriages have been performed by their Missionaries. Many of these have become heads of families; distinguished from the rest of their

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17 Watson, Works, Vol. II, p. 109.
18 Ibid., pp. 109-110.
19 Ibid., pp. 111-112.

> fellows by the existence of a superior relation between them and their children; by the strength which virtue gives to affection and that relation only can supply; by more of respect abroad, and by peace at home.[20]

Before Christianity was introduced to them, a sick negro would be forsaken by everyone, wife, husband, relations, and left to die alone. Among those who had found Christ, that was no longer true. Religion had made a difference to them in trouble, sickness,[21] and death. After enumerating the beneficial results of Christianity to the slaves, Watson could well posit that the character and manner of the termination of slavery itself was dependent upon the infusion of Christian principles among them.[22]

A word more may be said about Watson's idea as to the method by which slavery should come to an end. He was staunchly against all attempts simply to mitigate the conditions of the slaves, as some suggested. Although Parliament might have passed laws in favor of the slaves, Watson knew that the carrying out of the laws would be left to each individual planter, in which case, the slave would still have no redress for his wrongs or an assurance of his rights.[23] He also disapproved of setting a date for abolition far into the future in order that it might gradually be achieved. To those who proposed the solution, he said:

> If the fetter be so comfortable an ornament to the African limb, that in the name of mercy itself we are conjured not to snap it at a blow,

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20 Watson, Works, Vol. II, Sermon V, "Instruction of Slaves," pp. 113-114.
21 Ibid., p. 114.
22 Ibid., p. 104.
23 Appendix C.

> why should it be allowed, why should they give us their full consent, to deprive them of it by a slow process of filing, which may take some 50 or 100 years to effect their liberation from it?[24]

Within a month before Watson's death, he received a letter from Buxton in which his advice was requested. His reply was his last letter. He disclosed to Buxton the method by which he believed the changes of emancipation could be most easily wrought:

> I am no advocate for immediate emancipation in the strict sense; and have always thought that fixing a not distant time for the extinction of slavery would of necessity bring the planters themselves into preparatory measures, with zeal and sincerity, not excluding religious instruction.[25]

With confidence in the work of the missionaries, he added that all the smaller colonies in which missions had long been in operation were already prepared for the change, however great it might be. When Buxton informed him of a plan of religious instruction for the freed slaves, Watson made his last plea for the work of the Methodist Missionaries among those downtrodden people:

> Dismiss all plans of yours and your brother statesmen for providing religious instruction for the slaves, and take the simple mode of availing yourselves of what God has provided for you, by affording encouragement to the zeal and piety of those who will voluntarily carry on that work, by building them places of worship, spread over the islands, and houses for the Missionaries and schoolmasters, and by promoting liberal subscriptions to the different Societies.[26]

Upon putting down his pen Watson closed his battle for the rights of slaves and against slavery. Shortly thereafter, he had a

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24 Watson, Works, Vol. 1, p. 525.
25 Ibid., p. 593.
26 Ibid., p. 595.

visit from Mason who had also been a secretary to the mission work. During the course of their conversation, Watson remarked, "I am now a dying man; but it is a privilege to have lived to see the time when the day of liberty begins to dawn upon those poor oppressed people in the West Indies."[27]

Comparatively little reference has been made by Methodist writers to Watson's contribution on behalf of the slaves. He has usually been remembered for his preaching, leadership of the mission program, and theological writing. Seen in retrospect, however, his aid to the cause of abolition assumes a greater proportion. In his own day, Bunting said of him that his "Defence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the West Indies" and "Sermon on the Religious Instruction of the Slaves in the West Indies" had associated his name and memory with "imperishable honours" and rendered a lasting service to the cause for which he pleaded.[28] In more recent times, Edwards has admitted that "Watson did more for the slaves by his platform speaking and his constant writing than has been commonly realized."[29] The names most often heard in relation to abolition are those of that small but noble group of men who fought the battle in Parliament, and their immediate friends and co-laborers. Theirs would have been a long and discouraging, if not impossible, task, as Buxton himself intimated in his letter to a friend in 1824, if an aroused public opinion had not

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27 Watson, Works, Vol. 1, p. 599.
28 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," p. 42.
29 Maldwyn Edwards, After Wesley, p. 71.

turned the tide in their favor. That Methodists as a large and vocal body were a part of that tide is assured by the 224,000 Methodist signatures out of 354,000 names on the petition presented to the Parliament of 1833.[30] Watson, primarily, was responsible for the informed and aroused stand of the Methodist body. In his "Defence of Missions" he began to open the eyes of individual Methodists to the conditions of the slaves in the West Indies. Through his pulpit eloquence, of which the sermon on "The Religious Instruction of Slaves" is only one example, his influence was felt throughout the entire Conference. This is all the more certain because of the unity existing between the issues of missions and slavery in the tumultuous years preceding abolition. It was Watson who initiated the denunciation of slavery first made by the Conference in 1825. It was he who fashioned and proposed the more drastic proposals accepted by the Conferences of 1830, 1831, and 1832. Watson's efforts in this cause must be affirmed as among the most lasting and significant contributions of this man of many sympathies and talents.

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30 Edwards, op. cit., p. 72.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPATOR IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

The Wesleyan Methodist Societies of the early nineteenth century inherited an essentially conservative Tory attitude from John Wesley. In the rare instances when its leaders entered political discussions they were more often than not in favor of the government. Loyalty to the state was regarded and preached as a virtue. As to this relation between politics and the pulpit, Watson, in a late review, explained his position as follows:

> The question, therefore, . . . resolves itself into this, - whether there are any political duties enjoined in the New Testament; a question which admits of an immediate and explicit answer. It prescribes the rendering "unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's," of "honour to whom honour is due, tribute to whom tribute." It declares human government to be an ordination of God, from which Christians are not, by virtue of their allegiance to Christ, in any civil manner exempt, but to which they are "to submit," even for "the Lord's sake." It connects the honouring of the Chief Magistrate of a state with the fear of God, the first and fundamental duty of religion. . . . Of these duties Ministers are exhorted to put the churches in mind. They are to be held up in their services, so that none may offend through ignorance, or sin for want of warning. It follows, therefore, that if it be the duty of every Minister to enforce all the parts of Christian morality, he is bound to dwell upon this branch of it as often as upon any other of the relative and social duties.[1]

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. VII, Review 26, p. 512.

It is not surprising that one who held such views should apply his talents in the government's behalf.

While Watson was still a member of the Methodist New Connexion, two demonstrations of his loyal attitude arose. In 1807, during his ministry in Liverpool, a fast friendship developed between himself and a Mr. Kaye. When Kaye proposed to begin a weekly newspaper, "The Liverpool Courier," upon loyal principles, Watson was prevailed upon to lend his assistance in its management.[2] In the following year William Roscoe, a gentleman who was connected with a banking firm in Liverpool and who had represented his borough in Parliament, published a pamphlet, "Considerations on the Causes, Objects, and Consequences of the Present War, and on the Expediency or the Danger of Peace with France," in which he attempted to embarrass the government and suggested that the nation "crouch to Bonaparte." Watson, having no sympathy with the views of Roscoe, retaliated by publishing "A Letter to William Roscoe, Esq., containing Strictures on his late Publication"[3] in which he defended the course taken by the government. Thirty years later The Methodist Magazine recalling the dispute said:

> We who believe in the correctness of the evangelical principles of Mr. Watson, believed that the victory remained with him; they who think that Mr. Roscoe's principles were correct, or, which amounts to the same thing, who believe in the complete isolation of the principles of Mr. Watson, will, as a matter of course, be of opinion that his attack was pointless and inefficient.[4]

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2 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 111.

3 Ibid., p. 118.

4 Wesleyan - Methodist Magazine, March, 1838, p. 213.

On one other occasion Watson was called upon to uphold the cause of the government. In 1811 the general economic depression of the country plus the poor condition of the working people gave rise to riots in Yorkshire and Nottingham.[5] The years which followed were marked by economic distress. In 1817 a good harvest eased conditions, but only temporarily.[6] That year, as well as the preceding one, saw numerous Luddite riots and the destruction of machinery by mobs.[7] The working class people, among whom the Methodists had a large appeal, were beginning to seek their own rights. A number of discerning studies have been made of the relationship between Methodism and the working class movements, among them R. F. Wearmouth's Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England and Maldwyn Edwards' After Wesley. In its theological individualism and in its practices Methodism tended to exert a liberal influence in political thought, Edwards finds.[8] Wearmouth further affirms that "there can be no doubt that a rather close connexion existed between the Methodists and the Radicals."[9] As proof, he relates that the Curate of Holmfirth, where there was a large Methodist constituency, reported in February, 1817, that a declaration of loyalty to the Sovereign and the Constitution, prepared for public signature by the Huttersfield magistrates, had been signed by not one of the body of Methodists. Another clerical

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5 W. T. Selley, England in the Eighteenth Century, p.240.
6 Cambridge Modern History, Vol. X, p. 580.
7 Ibid., p. 576.
8 Maldwyn Edwards, After Wesley, pp. 38-45.
9 Robert F. Wearmouth, Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England, 1800-1850, p. 169.

magistrate writing from Wakefield in 1819 expressed as his opinion, "The greater part of the people called Methodists are united with the Radicals; they assemble in the evenings in certain cottages in the country, under the pretence of religious worship, but their real intention is to promote the work of sedition."[10] Allowing for the prejudice against Methodism on the part of clerical magistrates, it still appears certain that Methodism was exerting an influence on political thought and action which its leaders neither understood nor would have countenanced.

The leading Methodist ministers of the period objected to the political disturbances and urged the Methodists to refrain from participating in them. To Grindrod, Bunting wrote in 1817, "The offence you gave the Jacobinical party by recommending patience to the suffering poor of your flock, was a real honour to you, and has, probably, by the over-ruling providence of God, ended well for the credit of Methodism."[11] Bunting himself refused to bury a Luddite who had been shot, since he regarded the dead man as a criminal and completely unworthy of a Christian burial.[12] His views were such that he avowed that "Methodism was as much opposed to democracy as it was to sin."[13]

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10 Wearmouth, op. cit., (quoted by Wearmouth from H. O. 42. 200, 1819,) p. 169.

11 T. P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, D. D., Vol. II, pp. 114-15.

12 Edwards, op. cit., p. 31.

13 Wearmouth, op. cit., (from a statement by Jabez Bunting reported in "Nottingham Review," Dec. 14, 1827,) p. 156.

The Pastoral Address of 1819, written by Watson, states the official attitude of the Conference and urges the Methodist people to remain loyal to their government and its officials:

> As many of you to whom this measure of national suffering has been appointed reside in places where attempts are making, by unreasonable and wicked men, to render the privations of the poor the instruments of their own designs against the peace and the Government of our beloved country, we are affectionately anxious to guard all of you against being led astray from your civil and religious duties by their dangerous artifices. Remember you are Christians, and are called by your profession to exemplify the power and influence of religion by your patience in suffering, and by "living peaceably with all men." Remember that you belong to a religious society which has, from the beginning, explicitly recognized as high and essential parts of Christian duty, to "fear God, and honour the King; to submit to Magistrates for conscience sake, and not to speak evil of dignitaries.". . .
>
> Be it your care, beloved, who are exposed to this trial, "to serve God in all good conscience;" to preserve your minds from political agitations; to follow your occupations and duties in life in peaceful seclusion from all strife and tumults; and God will, in his own time, appear by his providence to your relief. . . Whilst this period of suffering continues, we affectionately and earnestly exhort the opulent members of our societies and congregations, to afford as ample a relief as possible to their brethren in distress.[14]

Shortly after Conference all of England was stirred, pro or con, by an episode which took place in Manchester on August 16th. Some 60,000 unarmed working class people gathered, with permission, for a meeting in St. Peter's field. When the magistrates became alarmed at the sight of so great a multitude, they ordered the speaker arrested. When the arresting agents

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14 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, "Pastoral Address," pp. 330-31.

found it difficult to reach the speaker, an order was given for the cavalry to charge the group. By that inhuman act eleven persons, including two women, were killed, over a hundred were wounded by sabres, and several hundred more were injured by the horses or crushed in the stampede.[15] Whether the "Peterloo" incident prompted the action, one cannot know; but four days later Watson sent a copy of the Pastoral Address to Lord Sidmouth along with a letter assuring him, with an abundance of confidence, "No man would be tolerated as a member of our Societies who should make himself a member of a political club, or take any part in such meetings as have recently disturbed the country." He continued, "Veneration for the reigning family, love for the Constitution, and respect for the laws are sentiments we proclaim in every part of the land; and during the prevalence of Luddism and the more recent spread of disaffection, several of our ministers who had publicly warned their congregations, were, and continue to be, the objects of sanguinary menaces of desperate and violent men."[16]

In the Pastoral Address of the following year Watson mentions the continued spread of political agitations and attributes it to the fact that "the correcting hand of a just and holy God has not been acknowledged."[17]

Two other events occurred which induced Watson to more direct political action. One involved Lord Sidmouth, to

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15 G. M. Trevelyn, British History in the Nineteenth Century, p. 189.
16 Wearmouth, op. cit., pp. 145-46.
17 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 337.

whom he assured Methodist loyalty in 1819. On May 9, 1811, Lord Sidmouth moved the first reading of a Bill which stirred anxiety among the Methodists. He had previously spoken to Coke and Clarke about it and assuaged their fears concerning it. When he introduced the Bill in the House of Lords, he declared that his intention was to procure a clear declaration of the law relating to the granting of licenses to preach and "to remove the erroneous interpretation adopted by magistrates in general and to prevent improper persons from office. Certain persons claiming these certificates were cobblers, tailors, pig drovers and chimney sweeps."[18] In order to gain the ends, he recommended that no one should be granted a certificate unless his application were signed by six reputable house-keepers of the communion to which he belonged.[19] The Methodists perceived that, should the Bill pass, it would seriously injure the societies since it also prohibited local preachers from preaching. Lord Sidmouth moved a second reading of the Bill on May 21st. During the interim the Committee of Privileges of the Wesleyan Methodists had passed resolutions protesting against it and had sent a deputation headed by Thomas Thompson to Lord Sidmouth. When Lord Sidmouth refused to withdraw the Bill, the Wesleyan Methodists began to draw up petitions against it.[20] At this time Watson was a minister for the Methodist New Connexion and was stationed in Manchester. One Sunday night he and Jabez Bunting both preached in Stockport and happened to meet for the first

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18 Edwards, op. cit., p. 76.
19 Ibid., p. 77.
20 Ibid., p. 78.

time while returning to Manchester. Lord Sidmouth's Bill occupied the conversation of the two ministers. At Bunting's suggestion Watson published his views in a letter in the Manchester Exchange Herald on May 23rd. After decrying the difficulty which the Bill's provisions would place in the path of one trying to gain a license to preach, the letter gives as further reasons for opposing it:

> It absolutely repeals a number of the provisions of the Toleration Act, in relation to the great body of itinerant dissenting ministers, and renders them liable to the ballot and to all parochial offices. It goes to destroy the very existence of a large and useful class of subordinate teachers, who, though engaged in business, devote the Sabbath to the supply of different congregations, and to the general religious instruction of their fellow creatures; in as much as it is not possible, under this Bill, for them to obtain a license by any means.

With a mind to the Methodist chapels which depended on local preachers he adds:

> It also violates the rights of property; because many places of worship, especially those belonging to the Wesleyan Methodists, being deprived of their present supply of ministers, must lose their value, and sink, with the whole weight of their respective debts, upon the shoulders of the trustees.

He urges the necessity of hasty action:

> Those of you Gentlemen, who have had the opportunity of perusing the Bill in question, need not be told that it is necessary for the Dissenters of this town to make an immediate application to Parliament to prevent it from passing into law. . .Tomorrow, at furthest, ought to be fixed on as the day of meeting, that the petitions may lie in the different places of worship on the Sunday following for signatures.
>
> Let us petition; and let us petition in a manly spirit. Let us go to the House of Peers, and tell Lord Sidmouth that we love our venerable Sovereign as fervently as any of his subjects;. . . that in sobriety, industry, loyalty, benevolence,

> and every character of men, Christians, and patriots, the Protestant Dissenters will yield the palm of preference to none; that they have ever been thankful for their privileges, and in no circumstances have abused them; and that, for the Legislature to curtail them, would be to inflict a punishment where no crime is alleged. [21]

What effect Watson's letter produced on the dissenters of Manchester, one cannot know. Obviously, however, he was not alone in feeling as he did; for thirty thousand Methodists signed the petitions which, in due time, were presented against the Bill.[22] When so great a demonstration of public opinion appeared against the Bill, Lord Sidmouth found himself standing practically alone in defending it and, thereupon, withdrew it.

The issue of slavery involved Watson more deeply than any other in politics. In his resolutions which were adopted by the Conference of 1830, he suggested that Methodists use their franchise to vote for anti-slavery candidates in the election which was expected in the not too distant future. Such an endorsement of the exertion of clerical influence over the laity's political powers had not been previously given by the Methodist Conference. Indeed, it is somewhat difficult to reconcile Watson's resolution with his assurance to Lord Sidmouth that no member of a Methodist Society would be tolerated who would become a member of a political club. Doubtless, he was convinced that the justice and urgency of the cause justified the deviation from Methodist practice. In the spring of 1831 he prepared a letter to Methodists on the matter which he proposed to pub-

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21 Manchester Exchange Hearld, Thurs., May 23, 1811.
22 Edwards, op. cit., p. 78.

lish. In it he reminds the people that their founder's was one of the first voices raised in England against the outrage of slavery and adds, "You must either act worthy of such a leader by conscientiously refusing your votes to any pro-slavery candidate who proposes to represent you in Parliament, or be partakers of this frightful guilt." He assures them that the noble group of men in Parliament who have taken up the cause wait only for reinforcements to complete the task begun with the abolishing of the slave trade. At such a time, he says, every vote "ought to be felt by us as a trust, the more sacred, and for which we must give stricter account."[23]

Watson left his letter unpublished, however; for the General Meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society in meeting on the 23rd of April agreed to issue an "Address to the People of Great Britain and Ireland" for the same purpose. The document, urging voters to vote only for candidates who would support emancipation, was bound with several monthly publications and otherwise distributed widely.[24] It contained the name of Watson in conjunction with others who so valiantly championed the cause: Buxton, Wilberforce, William Smith, Macaulay, Clarkson, Dr. Lushington, and Rev. Daniel Wilson.

When at last the election was imminent, Watson continued his efforts on behalf of the anti-slavery candidates. Macaulay, an avowed abolitionist, was contesting with Michael Sadler in Leeds. Watson wrote to the Rev. Sanderson in that town

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23 Watson, Works, Vol. 1, p. 536.
24 Ibid., pp. 534-35.

reminding him that, whereas Macaulay had inherited an abhorrence of slavery from his father and had committed himself as opposed to it, Sadler had "never opened his mouth in Parliament against slavery." With himself, he said, minor politics were out of the question; and if Sanderson felt as he did, he added, "I should be happy if you would say as much for Macaulay as is consistant for us as Ministers. You are quite at liberty to use my name."[25] When his action became known, he was severely criticised in the newspapers of Leeds. A correspondent of the "Patriot" for September 24, 1831, called him a "blasphemer" and described his letter as "the officious interference of a Methodist parson; in every sense only deserving of the most profound contempt." The "Intelligencer" for November 30, 1831, regarded his conduct as "a prostitution of religion in the cause of party politics."[26] Another critic referred to him as a "once flaming democrat."[27] Regardless of the critics of Watson's interference, Macaulay won the election, as did most of the anti-slavery contestants.

The urgency of the abolitionist cause and Watson's devotion to it indubitably led him to suggest means that he would have refused to sanction in others under different circumstances. For example, although Watson affirmed that a minister should preach civil as well as other social duties, and although he himself exerted a vocal influence in the election of 1831,

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25 Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, November, 1833, p. 647.
26 Wearmouth, op. cit., p. 146.
27 Ibid., p. 167.

when a brother minister had been reported at the previous Conference to have been preaching politics, and when Mr. Burdsall thought that a letter of rebuke should be sent to the offending brother, Watson agreed and further suggested that a special report of his conduct be given at the next Conference.[28] In his own case, however, the cause and the success were regarded as sufficient justification for the means, as had been true of the deviation in the Leeds Meeting for Missions in 1813.

From the point of view of significance, Watson's political activities are in no wise comparable to his contributions in other fields. They are, however, indicative of another aspect of the many-sided interests of the man and of his approach to matters of principle. Politically speaking he was a Tory, as had been Wesley. One who reads his works will be left in no doubt as to his complete loyalty to his country, his Sovereign, and his government; however, although he did not countenance the gathering of working men into political clubs to press and maintain their rights, he always found justification to suggest a petition or take a determined stand on an issue which he considered to involve a principle. In short, he was an heir and agent of Methodism's traditional and theoretical Toryism, but he was also a product and propagator of her liberal tendencies.

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28 B. Gregory, Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism, p. 100.

CHAPTER 5

WRITER

When Richard Watson dedicated himself to God and to work in the Methodist Societies, he dedicated all there was of himself, his mind, voice, time, energies, and certainly not the least, his pen. With an astonishing regularity, and most often in the face of pain and sickness in addition to his ministerial duties, he produced a body of literature unequaled in scope and mass by any of his Methodist contemporaries. He gave to his communion a systematic statement of its belief and fashioned tools of study for its ministers; he championed its traditions, beliefs, and ecclesiastical order; he produced literally volumes on behalf of its mission program, and still other volumes of sermons; he wrote a biography of its founder, and added a supplement to its hymn book. For sixteen consecutive years he produced at least one volume, and often more than one, a year for his cause. The following is a list of his longer works.

1800 - An Address to the People Called Methodists.

1807 - The Stranger in Liverpool.

History of the Reign of George III.

1808 - A Letter to William Roscoe, Esq.*

1813 An Address to the Public, on missions.

1816 General Report of the Methodist Missions.

1817 Defence of the Methodist Missions in the West Indies.*

1817 - General Report of the Methodist Missions.

1818 - Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Christ and the Use of Reason in Matters of Revelation.*

Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1819 - Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1820 - Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley.*

1821 - Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1822 - Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1823 - Theological Institutes, Part I *

Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1824 - Theological Institutes, Part II.*

Religious Instruction of Slaves in the West Indies Advocated and Defended.*

A Catechism of the Evidences of Christianity.*

Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1825 - Theological Institutes, Part III.*

Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1826 - The Labyrinth, or Popish Circle, a translation from the Latin of Simon Episcopius.

Theological Institutes, Part IV.*

* The titles marked * are included in the collected Works of the Rev. Richard Watson.

1826 - Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1827 - Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1828 - Theological Institutes, Part V.*

Affectionate Address to the Trustees, Stewards, Local Preachers, and Leaders of the South London Circuit.*

Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

1829 - Theological Institutes, Concluded *

1830 - Conversations for the Young.*

1831 - Life of the Rev. John Wesley.*

Supplement to the Hymn Book, in conjunction with others.

Bible Dictionary, Part I.

1832 - Bible Dictionary, complete

He began an Exposition of the New Testament, but death overtook him before its completion.

In addition to the titles above, he prepared "Pastoral Addresses" for the Conference, and wrote a number of sermons which were published individually during his life. He was a constant contributer of book reviews and articles on theology to the Methodist Magazine.

The very mass of the material produced by Watson prohibits a detailed examination of each individual work. Indeed, such an effort would be abortive since, as one might expect from an output of almost two major publications a year for fifteen

years, the chaff and the wheat often lie side by side. In the scope of this present study, however, most of his important works are examined within their proper contexts since a great deal of his writing was done to meet a given situation. It is the purpose of this chapter to call attention to his outstanding contributions which are not treated elsewhere in this study and to evaluate Watson's efforts as a writer.

Watson reached the apex of his powers as a defensive writer in the production of his Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley. In the early part of the year 1820 Robert Southey published his Life of Wesley, and the Rise and Progress of Methodism. That the biography was even written by Southey added a respectable luster to Wesley's name in literary and intellectual circles; for Southey was at that time the Poet Laureate, famous as a biographer as well as a poet, and the most highly regarded individual of English letters. His biography presented for the first time a portrait of Wesley in a light which appealed to those beyond the fellowship of his followers. Samuel Taylor Coleridge is reported to have written on a blank page of the first volume of his copy, "How many and many an hour of self-oblivion do I owe to this Life of Wesley!"[1] Even a Methodist minister of the period admits the biography to be "highly entertaining" and such as to "invite the perusal of all classes of people."[2] In spite of its laudable aspects, however, stalwart Methodists regarded it as presenting an untrue picture

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1 E. J. Brailsford, Richard Watson, Theologian and Missionary Advocate, p. 107.

2 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 316.

of Wesley and a gross misunderstanding of his religious principles. The Annual Conference, therefore, deemed an answer to the work necessary and passed the following resolution at its meeting in the summer of 1820:

> The conference approve of the request of the Book-Committee to Mr. Watson, to prepare a Review of the Life of the Rev. John Wesley, which has been recently published by Mr. Southey; and the Book-Committee are directed to circulate that Review, when printed, as extensively as possible.[3]

Thus Watson was requested to undertake the task of replying to the Poet Laureate. It is of interest to note that the suggestion of Watson's name to the Conference was made by Dr. Adam Clarke with whom he had grappled on the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ two years previously.[4] Watson published his scathing reply in the autumn of 1820. Although the work was completed in a comparatively short time, it should be ranked as one of his most finished and competent products from a literary point of view. His biographer claims for it that "as a vindication of Mr. Wesley's views and proceedings, it was not inferior to any work that had appeared since the publication of his own incomparable 'Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,' about eighty years before."[5] Jackson also relates an anecdote concerning the document.[6] A copy of it was said to have fallen into the hands of the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV, and was read by him with considerable interest and avidity. Upon completing it, he was reported to have expressed the opinion, "Mr. Watson

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3 Minutes of the Methodist Conference, 1820.
4 See page 258.
5 Jackson, op. cit., p. 322.
6 Ibid., p. 326.

has the advantage over my Poet Laureate." A later writer discredits the story, however, and feels that Jackson could "scarcely have believed that the 'first gentleman in Europe' was capable of leaving his pack of cards for such a mental recreation."[7] There is no doubt that Watson's reply was appreciated in his own day. In more recent years it has been regarded as "eloquent and indignant,"[8] and "as dealing severely with the Laureate."[9]

Watson begins his reply with mingled appreciation and censure: appreciation for the fact that Southey's work is obviously not a hasty production but is one showing evidence of "considerable candour" and far more justice and fairness than had been anticipated, censure for the misrepresentations made by Southey and for the fact that Southey, in his opinion, lacked the theological qualifications necessary for the biographer of Wesley. Watson names two main objections to the biography which when elaborated constitute the general backbone of his Observations:

> The Wesley of Mr. Southey is not, in several of its most important characteristics, Mr. Wesley himself; and the picture of Methodism which he has drawn is not just, either in tone or in composition.[10]

The Observations is divided into twelve sections. In the first two Watson examines what he believes to be Southey's lack of qualifications for the task he had undertaken. Southey,

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7 Brailsford, op. cit., p. 108.
8 Ibid., p. 109.
9 John Stoughton, Religion in England from 1800 to 1850, Vol. 1, p. 326.
10 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. V, p. 354.

he affirms, did not understand the conversion of Wesley, nor did he understand the act of conversion itself. Furthermore, Southey held a definitely false philosophy on many significant points, such as belittling the act of Providence whereby a religious leader is raised up, minimising the work of the Holy Spirit in a man's call to and success in the ministry. In the next three sections Watson defends Methodism's beliefs, particularly the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit or assurance and the truth and validity of sudden conversions, from Southey's charges of enthusiasm. His arguments in this regard are examined explicitly in the chapter of this study on the witness of the Spirit. In sections six to eight inclusive, Watson attempts to dispel Southey's aspersions regarding the practices of Methodism, those particularly involved in what he calls "enthusiastic extravagances" and in the separation of the body from the Established Church. A further discussion of these points is found in the chapter of this study dealing with Watson as an apologist of Methodism. In the last section, Watson corrects Southey's misrepresentations of the character of Wesley. Intermingled with his appreciation of Wesley, Southey had charged him with enthusiasm,[11] the need of an humbler spirit and a quieter heart, and ambition.[12] Watson calls attention to the charges, which he places in opposition to Southey's equally strong expressions of Wesley's worth, and then says:

> Now, either Mr. Southey's skill in character painting has been greatly over-rated, or he has

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11 Robert Southey, The Life of John Wesley, p. 178.
12 Ibid., p. 194.

> wilfully erred on one side or the other. Nothing is so impossible in nature, as the union of those qualities which he has infused into the character of Mr. Wesley; and the combination, in a literary or a moral view, is so monstrous as to become ridiculous.[13]

Upon occasions Watson used his pen as a knife in the hands of his satirical wit. To the charge of ambition leveled against Wesley, he retorts:

> I fear that ambitious Clergymen may now be found in the Church. Let then the question of Mr. Wesley's ambition be put to the proof. Will any of them come among us to seek its gratification? We will give them as many of the advantages for obtaining "notoriety" which Mr. Wesley possessed, as possible. They shall have enough of duty, long walks, and longer rides, and fields and streets to preach in, and the darkest parts of the country, and the rudest of its people, and the hardest fare. In proportion, too, as they imitate the zeal of the Wesleys, we will show them all honour and respect on our part; and they will not lack that reproach of which the world is not more parsimonious in the present day, than when the names of the Wesleys were cast out as evil. It will not fail to calumniate them while living, if they give it too much disturbance; and perhaps some future Poet Laureate may lay by his birth-day and coronation odes, to asperse them when dead.[14]

Two other examples will serve to indicate the literary excellence of Watson's work. In a vein of satire Watson caricatures Southey as he would have been had he been a Clergyman of Wesley's day:

> The mention of the "burden of sin," though found in his Liturgy, would have called up all his suspicions of fanaticism; a sob from a broken heart would have seriously disturbed his philosophic composure; and any expression of mental agony in the positions of the body, or aspect of the countenance, would probably

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13 Watson, op. cit., p. 506.
14 Ibid., p. 512.

have put him to flight.[15]

He describes the preaching of Wesley and its effects in a passage which is simple yet noble, unadorned yet moving:

> The multitudes to whom he preached were generally grossly ignorant of the Gospel. He poured upon their minds a flood of light: His discourses were plain, pointed, earnest, and affectionate. The feeling produced was deep, piercing, and in numberless cases genuine; such as we have no right, if we believe the Bible, to attribute to any other cause than that inward operation of God with his truth which alone can render human means effectual. Many of those on whom such impressions were made, retired in silence, and nurtured them by reflection. The stricken deer hastened into solitude, there to bleed unobserved by all but God.[16]

During Watson's life and immediately afterwards he was chiefly praised and remembered for his Theological Institutes. At his death the Methodist Magazine ranked it, along with his Bible Dictionary, as his "great works."[17] Abel Stevens, in his History of Methodism, bestows an abundance of praise upon it:

> That work presented to the world a scientific exhibition of Methodistic theology, and is one of the most elaborate and thorough bodies of divinity produced in our century. Though thoroughly Arminian, its candour and vigorous logic have secured it the admiration of Calvinistic theologians. . .All the other labours of Richard Watson sink into insignificance when compared with this sublime mission of theological education to tens of thousands of the most energetic preachers of Christianity in the 19th century.[18]

Stevens intimates that Watson wrote for educational purposes.

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15 Watson, op. cit., p. 427.
16 Ibid., p. 437-38.
17 The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, February, 1833, p. 150.
18 Abel Stevens, The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century Called Methodism, p. 372.

Bunting confirms this in his "Memorials of Watson" in which he says that the Institutes were "chiefly written with a view to the theological improvement of the junior Ministers and the younger Local Preachers."[19] One may well imagine that Watson's mind often returned to his own days as a young Methodist preacher while he was in the process of writing the Institutes. He would remember his searchings for truth, his introduction to strange new ideas with no guiding hand to lead him through the maze. He would remember, too, his being accused of Arianism and the door of the chapel being closed to his preaching, his foolish pride and impetuosity in resigning rather than in clearing his name, the wasted days and uncertainty before his acceptance by the New Connexion and finally by the Wesleyans again. Ten years of his life might have been more effectively used if he had had a guide along the way. Doubtless, these reflections entered his mind more than once throughout the eight years he worked on the Institutes. The Institutes, however, served a purpose other than educational. Wesley left behind him a prodigious amount of writings illuminating his theology and ideas of Christian experience and practice. As has often been the case with spiritual leaders, he never attempted to set in an organized fashion the sum of his conclusions. From a theological point of view the nearest things to textbooks possessed by the early Methodists were his standard sermons and his Notes on the New Testament. Watson's Theological Institutes represented

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19 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," p. 41.

the first unified statement of Methodist doctrine, a "complete course of systematic theology, based on those views of scripture which Mr. Wesley was led to take."[20] As such, it was never intended to supplant Wesley's works as the standard of that doctrine; rather, the attitude toward it in that respect is expressed by James Dixon:

> We are perfectly aware that Mr. Watson's Institutes are not the legal standard of Methodist doctrine, and never can be; yet it may be unhesitatingly asserted that they constitute the moral and scientific standard of that doctrine, and that they are worthy of the position which they occupy.[21]

Watson himself makes a partial statement of his purposes in the advertisement to the first volume of the work.

> The object of this work is to exhibit the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity, in a form adapted to the use of young Ministers and Students in Divinity. It is hoped, also, that it may supply the desideratum of a body of Divinity, adapted to the present state of theological literature; neither Calvinistic on the one hand, nor Pelagian on the other.[22]

Although the work was published in six parts, it is actually divided by only four which were enumerated by Watson above, namely, the evidences, doctrines, morals, and institutions of Christianity. The first part is composed of twenty chapters dealing in a logical progression with the nature of man, his rational weaknesses, the necessity of a revelation which arises from that weakness and which is demonstrated among

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20 The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, March, 1838, p. 215.
21 William Willan, Sermons and Outlines by the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 72-73.
22 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 5.

the heathen, the evidences necessary to authenticate such a revelation, the dependability of Scripture as a source of evidence, and finally, the evidences themselves, miracles, prophecies, other internal and collateral evidences. The second part consists of twenty-nine chapters setting forth the existence and attributes of God, the proof and nature of the Trinity, the divinity and nature of Christ, the fall of man, God's plan of redemption, the atonement, the benefits of it and its extent. A shorter third part elaborates through four chapters the moral law and the duties one owes to God and one's neighbor. The last part dealing with the institutions of Christianity is also short, having only four chapters on the Church, the sacraments, baptism, and the Lord's supper.

In the work Watson makes no claims of being an originator of new doctrine; quite the contrary, he strives with vigor to show that the doctrines which he upholds are those which all correct interpreters of scripture throughout the ages have maintained. One is surprised by the relatively few references to Wesley and his works as against the often lengthy quotations he appropriates from the Anglican divines. It is as if Watson is leaning over backward to say to his reading public, "Many charges have been brought against Wesley and the Methodists of being enthusiastic innovators in matters of Christian experience and doctrine; but, behold, we are more orthodox and true to our mutual spiritual forefathers than are the present day Anglicans. It is they who have gone astray." If Watson is not an originator, it can be said that he organizes and interprets his material in an easily understandable and useable fashion.

Perhaps for that very reason it was the more valuable for the purpose for which it was written. Perhaps that is why one writer can say, "To the ministers of Watson's time and the succeeding generation these treatises were an almost priceless boon;"[23] and still another, "The natural loftiness of the genius of its author characterizes many of its pages, notwithstanding the rigours of a philosophic and scientific composition. For more than a generation the Institutes have been a text-book of the theological training of the Methodist ministry throughout the world. Their advantage in this respect has been incalculable, not only as it regards Methodism, but as affecting our common Protestantism."[24]

A student reading the Institutes today might be tempted to complain of the relatively great amount of space given to such issues as Deism and Calvinism which now seem somewhat dated. One must remember, however, that Watson lived in a day when these questions were still pregnant with passions which might give birth to an argument or a controversy at the mention of a text, and he was writing for practical purposes. He sought to equip young ministers with the weapons whereby they could defend their faith or convince a doubting sinner, as the case demanded. In order to be honest one must admit, however, that the work has its defects as well as its virtues. From a literary point of view, it is far inferior to his level of achievement in his Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley or the Defence of Missions in the West Indies. The discrepancy may be partially explained if not ex-

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23 Brailsford, op. cit., p. 101,102.
24 Stevens, op. cit., p. 372.

cused by the fact that the Institutes were written between 1821 and 1829, not only eight of the busiest years of Watson's ministry but also a period during which his illness became progressively worse. Whatever the reason, in reading the Institutes one senses the haste with which they must have been written; and one grows painfully aware of the lengthy quotations, sometimes pages long. It is interesting to note, however, that in spite of its defects the Theological Institutes, over fifty years after Watson's death, was still regarded by Stoughton as a work of "far superior merit."[25]

A word more must be said concerning Watson's other major publications. He produced two works primarily for young people, a Catechism on the Evidences of Christianity and Conversations for the Young. The first is supposedly a simplified version of Part I of the Institutes while the latter is of the nature of a study guide to the Bible. One cannot help wondering what effects the works had on the young people for whom they were written. Brailsford has properly said of them that they "may be simplified meat, but milk for babes they certainly are not."[26] Even Bunting is reported to have euphemistically remarked of the catechism, "Mr. Watson was not the fittest man to draw up catechisms. He was designed for a loftier region."[27]

Another attempt by Watson which, to say the least, fell short of his highest standard was his Life of Wesley. This

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25 Stoughton, op. cit., p. 327.
26 Brailsford, op. cit., p. 103.
27 B. Gregory, Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism, p. 138.

work may be more aptly called a compilation of material relating to Wesley and his thought than a biography. The writer of the review of the book found in the Methodist Magazine for July, 1831, does a masterly job of implying what he does not care to say:

> Though it courts no popularity by an accommodation of truth to the taste of a degenerate age, but seeks rather to elevate the judgment of its readers to the true scriptural standard, the simplicity of its plan fits it for general usefulness, and will make it decidedly a popular volume. Utility is the obvious aim of its accomplished author; and he has left the field of a more purely literary interest still open for cultivation. His talents fitted him for either task; but he has probably chosen the more excellent way.[28]

A Methodist writer removed from Watson's generation is more just in his criticism if less tender in its statement:

> Watson's Life was prepared at the request of the Conference, and was supposed to be a popular summary of facts and principles. If we judged by internal evidence alone, we should decide undoubtedly that the ascription of the book to the man who wrote the Reply to Southey was a literary libel.[29]

The Conference of 1831 requested Watson to compile a Dictionary of the Bible. He complied and published the first part in October of the same year. At that time a reviewer in the Methodist Magazine said:

> It is a gratifying circumstance that its compilation has fallen into the hands of one who is so competent to do justice to the several subjects which it embraces. . .Its theological articles are rich and instructive; and those on

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28 The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, July, 1831, p. 495.
29 W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, and George Eayers, A New History of Methodism, Vol. I, p. 421.

> Biblical subjects cast great light upon the phraseology, the biography, the history, and the prophecies of Holy Scripture.[30]

The remainder was finished and published in the following spring. That the work was well received is evident from the fact that a third edition was already in preparation at the time of Watson's death less than a year later.

There is no doubt but that Watson was greatly appreciated in his day as a theologian and polemic. Even after his death his writings continued to be popular; and when an edition of his works was published five years later, a reviewer said:

> That they are estimated in some measure in proportion to their worth is proved, we think, by the large demand there has been for the volumes while in the course of publication, although the treatises contained in many of them had previously been extensively circulated.[31]

To one reading Watson today many of the works seem dated in thought and expression; but they afford windows through which one may catch a glimpse into his mind and heart. One is conscious, first, of the consistency with which Watson returns again and again to the same theme. Whether he is writing of human reason or West Indian slavery, the subject occupies its station in the economy of his thought by virtue of its relation to God's redeeming love and His plan for man's salvation through Christ. Thus, God's love in Christ is the key in which Watson plays all his music. His melodies range from the uplifting promises of treble flights to the somber march of morality in the

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30 Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, Oct., 1831, p. 697.
31 Ibid., March, 1838, p. 204.

deep bass. The tune often changes, is sometimes ethereal, sometimes trite; but the key remains the same.

One is further aware of the various modes of his writing. In the best of his polemical works, for instance, the Observations of Southey's Life of Wesley, his wit exhibits its keen edge in satire while on other occasions it fails to rise above the level of harsh sarcasm. When trying to inspire people, as in his sermon on Ezekiel's vision, his imagination opens new vistas; and one begins to feel what must have been his tremendous power over congregations. On the other hand, when Watson becomes a teacher, as in some of the better passages of the Institutes, he purely and simply instructs. Like a cord binding his various modes together is his solemnity which is never discarded in his formal writings. The nearest approach of Watson to humor is an occasional flash of satire. If it were not for some of his private letters which have survived, one would think that Watson never eased the seriousness which pervades his published works.

As to the style of Watson's writing, he was given to using long and somewhat elaborate sentences. To parse many of them would tax the ingenuity of a draftsman as well as a professor of English. In his better moments, however, there is a harmony between ideas and language which is both clear and pleasant to read.

PART III

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

CHAPTER I

REASON AND REVELATION

A. Limits of Reason in Matters of Religion.

If one would sympathetically understand the writings of a man who proposes to state systematically the truths of religion, he must first question the presuppositions with which that writer enters upon his task. Thus, if one would understand Watson, he must first examine his attitude toward Scripture and his method of interpreting it. Although Watson never wrote a book developing between two covers his ideas on this subject, he was, nevertheless, positive and clear in his thinking on the matter.

When Dr. Adam Clarke's final volume of his Commentary on the New Testament reached the public, it was accompanied by some general, concluding statements in which he made plain the rules which had guided him in his study of the Bible. These tenets, along with Clarke's rejection of the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ, prompted Watson's first major entrance into the theological arena of his day. The controversy between these two equally devout men will be explored in more detail in a later chapter. Suffice it to say, Watson took issue with Clarke on the matter of the use of reason in interpreting Scripture. His thoughts at this time were confined to the negative aspect of the limitations of reason. Later, when writing

his Institutes, he developed more positively his idea of the necessity of revelation and the use of reason in interpreting revelation.

It is, therefore, the purpose of this chapter to reach an understanding of Watson's mature position as to the relation between reason and revelation. In order to do this, the three main facets of the development are to be examined: 1. the limitations of reason as delineated in his dispute with Clarke, 2. the evidences which led him to conclude that a revelation from God to the world was necessary, 3. the valid uses which he assigned to reason in its relation to that revelation. Finally, an attempt will be made to evaluate his conclusions and place them in their historical perspective.

A. The Limits of Reason in Matters of Religion.

In one of his sermons John Wesley once said, "It is the true remark of an eminent man, who had made many observations on human nature, 'If reason be against a man, a man will always be against reason.'"[1] In view of this it is somewhat ironic that one of the earliest theological disturbances among his flock should have been caused by a clash of opinions concerning the usefulness of reason in matters of religion. Such, however, was the case.

In the concluding principles affixed to his Commentary on the New Testament, Clarke made some general remarks on what

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1 John Wesley, The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, Vol. VI, p. 350.

he considered to be the function of reason. Perhaps if he had elaborated his few remarks, no question would have been raised concerning them. He did not, however, and their statement precipitated objections. In order to understand Watson, one must first inquire into Clarke's principles.

"What," one might ask Clarke, "is the relevance of reason to the Bible?" Clarke replies, "The doctrines of this book are doctrines of eternal reason, and they are revealed because they are such."[2] As if to explain, he says at another point, "The Sacred Writings are a system of pure unsophisticated reason, proceeding from the immaculate mind of God."[3] Anticipating those who might question whether all the mysteries of God are thus made so simple, he continues that the Sacred Writings are, "in many places, it is true, vastly elevated beyond what the reason of man could have devised or found out, but in no case contrary to human reason."[4] Whereas human reason could not discover for itself those things which are revealed, since the revelation was made, "it can both apprehend and comprehend them."[5] Clarke, therefore, distinguishes between the "eternal reason" of Scripture and the "human reason" which is to "apprehend and comprehend" the former. Watson, as shall be seen, takes issue with the doctor for failing to appreciate fully the vast difference between these two.

"What then," one might further ask, "is the function

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2 Adam Clarke, Commentary on the New Testament, p. 2129.
3 Loc. cit.
4 Loc. cit.
5 Loc. cit.

of human reason in relation to eternal reason, the doctrines of Scripture which are from the mind of God?" Clarke's answer is significant:

> It sees their perfect harmony among themselves, their agreement with the perfections of the divine nature, and their sovereign suitableness to the nature and state of man; thus reason approves and applauds. . . in every question which involves the eternal interests of man, the Holy Scriptures must be appealed to, in union with reason, their great commentator.[6]

In the light of the above statement, the conclusions he reaches are seen in proper perspective:

> No man can or should believe a doctrine that contradicts reason; but he may safely credit (in anything that concerns the nature of God) what is above his reason, and even this may be a reason why he should believe it.[7]
>
> The doctrine which cannot stand the test of rational investigation cannot be true. . . We have gone too far when we have said, "Such and such doctrines should not be subjected to rational investigation, being doctrines of pure revelation."[8]

Therefore, since it is the function of human reason to perceive the harmony existing between doctrines of Scripture, one should not believe a doctrine which contradicts that reason, which cannot stand up under such an investigation. In a final statement he acknowledges that human reason is not expected to bear the burden unaided. The same Spirit of God which gives revelation also improves and exalts reason.[9]

Shortly after the publication of the foregoing principles by Clarke, Watson produced a lengthy pamphlet, which dealt

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6 Clarke, op. cit., p. 2129.
7 Loc. cit.
8 Loc. cit.
9 Loc. cit.

for the most part with the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ but in which a number of pages were dedicated to an examination and refutation of those principles concerning the function of reason. The pamphlet helped establish him as Wesleyan Methodism's outstanding defender of the orthodox faith. Although his arguments are mostly of a negative nature, they indicate the foundation upon which he built his religious thought. The following words might just as well have been written at the close of his life as in 1818:

> What is said by the God of truth must be true; what appears reasonable to me may or may not be true; and the position which best becomes our humility, as fallible creatures, is, not that the scripture cannot be true if it be contrary to my reason, but that my reason cannot be true if it contradict scripture. This must be held conclusive, at least, by all who believe in the divine authority of the Bible.[10]

To what in Clarke's thought did Watson object? What limitations did he perceive to be involved in the exercise of reason by those objections? The answers to both questions are interwoven. Watson's objections may be classified in two categories: those general ones he made against what he considered to be the implications of Clarke's principles, and more specific ones made against specific clauses of the principles.

Of the general objections, he finds three.[11] In the first place, the implication of Clarke's view is that the meaning of Scripture is to be determined by our own idea as to what is reasonable. Secondly, he makes human reason the instrument not

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10 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 47.
11 Ibid., pp. 48-49.

simply of investigating the meaning of revelation but equally a "judge of doctrine." Thirdly, Watson discovers that Clarke makes it a canon that where the letter of Scripture indicates a doctrine which appears unreasonable, it must be understood in a sense which does appear reasonable. Such action, he fears, destroys the unity of truth and leaves the poor seeker without a standard of judgment, save that of varying human reason.

Of the specific objections, Watson states four.

1. In the first place, he agrees with Clarke "that the doctrines of Scripture are doctrines of eternal reason. Eternal reason is truth; and the word of God must in all its parts be true." After agreeing to that extent he parts company with the doctor on the ground that he has made a grievous error in failing to distinguish properly between human and eternal reason.

> It is remarkable that Dr. Clarke did not detect himself in a fallacy which vitiates his whole argument. With him human reason and eternal reason are assumed to be the same; in other words, that human reason is divine reason, and, therefore, infallible.[12]

He argues that, since human reason is obviously incomplete, "certainly, then, it is possible that there may be truths, the evidence of which can only be known to the eternal reason of the divine nature."[13] In all fairness to both, when Watson begins discussing "evidences of truth," he has deviated from the function which Dr. Clarke attributes to human reason, namely, that of seeing the "perfect harmony" among truths.

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12 Watson, op. cit., pp. 49-50.
13 Ibid., p. 50.

2. Watson then questions whether scriptural doctrine must or can be called upon to stand before a bar of rational investigation. He defines a rational investigation as "a process by which we inquire the truth and falsehood of anything by comparing it with what we already know, and what we have already determined to be true."[14] If it is to be a rational investigation, then it must be conducted on previous knowledge. If principles involving the authority of Scripture are included, then it ceases to be a rational investigation and becomes a scriptural one.[15]

> For this inquiry to be strictly and severely rational, all the knowledge of God which has been obtained by tradition or previous revelation must be put out of the case, and the whole of what is affirmed of God must be tested solely by some previous and tested truths. But where, then, is the inquirer to begin? To what will he liken God, or to whom compare him? What is the task we thus assign him?[16]

Watson's position invites comment. Once again he appears to have failed to notice Clarke's sentence assigning to human reason the task of seeing the "perfect harmony" among truths. He fails to argue against Clarke; but instead, he argues against the definition which he gives to the terms "rational investigation." Watson has also drawn an artificial and impossible line between "rational investigation" and "scriptural investigation." If followed completely, his rule would eliminate not only the use of Scripture in "rational investigation" but also the use of reason in "scriptural investigation." Such an end Watson would not desire.

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14 Watson, op. cit., p. 52.
15 Loc. cit.
16 Ibid., p. 53.

3. Thirdly, he objects to the principle that although reason could not have discovered doctrines of revelation, when they are discovered, reason is able not only to "apprehend but to comprehend them."

> Clarke may be understood to mean that reason, when aided by a revelation, is raised into so perfect a condition, that what appears incongruous to it must of necessity be concluded to be contrary to the revelation itself. This, however, proceeds upon that very false assumption, which I have already pointed out, that a revelation from God to man must not only declare a doctrine, but also discover its congruity with the reason and truth of things; or that reason, when put in possession of the doctrine, is able to complete the process, and to mount up to the discovery of its full evidence.[17]

He continues by pointing out that, if Clarke's principle were true, then faith would be impossible, since he makes scriptural knowledge certain; whereas, "believing has been defined by a great master 'to be the admitting or receiving any proposition to be true, upon arguments or proofs that persuade us to receive it as true, without certain knowledge, that is, knowledge derived from the thing itself, that it is so.'"[18]

Watson further points out that even Clarke himself, in his same set of rules, disowns so confident a view of human reason. After saying that those things which concern the nature of God might be above reason, Clarke writes, "I cannot comprehend the divine nature, therefore I adore it; if I could comprehend, I could not adore."[19]

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17 Watson, op. cit., p. 55.
18 Ibid., p. 58.
19 Clarke, op. cit., p. 2129.

4. Lastly, Watson objects to the principle that a man neither can nor should believe a doctrine which contradicts reason.

> If Dr. Clarke means that there is nothing in revelation, even as it respects the nature of God, which contradicts eternal reason or truth, then this is a mere truism; but if he means, as I suppose, that there are no attributes or modes of existence ascribed to the divine nature in his word, which contradict human reason, then I greatly fear that he will be understood, that whatever doctrine of Scripture contradicts the reason of him who reads it, is not true, and must be rejected.[20]

He believes that here again Clarke has assumed human reason to be equal with eternal reason, and thereby replaced an infallible[21] standard with a fallible one. Since the exercise of reason is limited by our knowledge and must be furnished with subjects[22] which it may arrange, compare, and judge, "in judging of things which are but imperfectly known," which must be the case with revelation,"in comparing what we know little of with what we know,-so as to affirm or deny anything concerning them, our reason. . . may be contradicted, and yet there may be no contradiction[23] of the truth of things itself."

Thus Watson limits the value of reason. It is never to be assumed that our weak human reason can be equated with the eternal reason of God. Human reason can neither discover the doctrines of revelation for itself nor necessarily "apprehend and comprehend them." Since human reason is fallible, its contra-

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20 Watson, op. cit., p. 62.
21 Ibid., p. 63.
22 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 24.
23 Watson, Works, Vol VII, p. 69.

diction by doctrines of revelation does not argue against those doctrines. Human reason is never to become a "judge of doctrine."

Upon the publication of Watson's pamphlet he was accused of incorrectly stating and misrepresenting Clarke.[24] As an examination of the objections makes clear, the charge is not completely without basis.[25] To believe that an intentional misrepresentation was made is unthinkable in view of the mutual respect and friendship which existed between the two men through the years, even down to their last Annual Conference, that of 1832, when they were seated side by side on the platform. It is conceivable, however, that Watson in his zeal to protect the primacy of revelation misunderstood Clarke. Did he refute Clarke? To make such a claim would be to disregard the fact that in at least three of his four main objections he did misread or misunderstand him. In the first he failed to note Clarke's distinction between eternal reason as those doctrines proceeding from the "mind of God" and human reason as the process by which one discovers the "harmony among" those doctrines. In the second he argued against his own definition of a "rational investigation" rather than the function assigned to human reason by Clarke. In the last he rejected Clarke's principle of not believing a doctrine which contradicts reason again without acknowledging the further idea that reason relates to the "harmony among" the doctrines.

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24 Thomas Exley, "Reply to Mr. Watson's Remarks on the Eternal Sonship," p. 1.

25 Ibid., p. 67.

B. The Necessity and Evidences of Revelation.

For what reason did Watson so zealously insist on acknowledging the frail, fallible nature of the human faculty of reason? First and foremost, he sought to guard against the exalted opinion whereby men felt themselves capable of discovering and understanding all they needed to know concerning God and His plans for the world. Such an attitude he felt to be the height of folly considering the depraved state of man. Clearly, man's reason alone was insufficient to assure him the knowledge he most needed. How, then, was man to gain such knowledge?

The knowledge so urgently needed by man is not to be disclosed by the efforts of his reason, but has already been offered by the revelation of God. Watson agrees with Ellis that revelation "is the foundation whereon we are to build all our abstract knowledge of invisible, immaterial things. It is from instruction alone that the mind takes this flight, advances to remote and sublime truths, which sense cannot discern."[1] He himself might have said, "Next to the gift of God's own son, revelation is the greatest blessing ever enjoyed!"[2]

When Watson speaks of revelation, exactly what does

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1 John Ellis, The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature, p. 96.

2 Robert Walker, "A Defence of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Eternal Sonship of Our Lord Jesus Christ," p. 2.

he mean? In the first place, revelation is that which:

> --gives information on those subjects which are most important to man, and which the world had darkened with the greatest errors; - the nature and perfections, claims and revelations of God; his will, as the rule of moral good and evil; the means of obtaining pardon and of conquering vice; the true Mediator between God and man; divine Providence; the chief good of man, respecting which alone more than 300 different opinions among the ancient sages have been reckoned up; man's immortality and accountability; and a future state.[3]

He qualifies his meaning by adding that a revelation should be in accord with the principles of former revelations, if previous ones have been given. The reason for this is obvious.

> For since it is a first principle, that God cannot err himself, nor deceive us, so far as one revelation renews or explains any truth in a preceding one, it must agree with the previous communication; and in what it adds to a preceding revelation, it cannot contradict any thing which it contains, if it be exhibited as a truth of unchangeable character on a duty of perpetual obligation.[4]

One cannot help wishing Watson had read Clarke with more understanding since this principle is in accordance with that of the latter concerning the function of reason. One would like further to ask Watson how the agreement of an alleged revelation with an accepted revelation is to be determined except human reason be utilized. Is it to be rejected if it does not coincide with the revelation which has gone before? Fortunately, the above test is not left as the sole determinant of authenticity. A true revelation should also be "accompanied with an

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3 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 86.
4 Loc. cit.

explicit and impressive external authentication, of such a nature as to make its truth obvious to the mass of mankind, and to leave no reasonable doubt as to its divine authority."[5] Such an external witness to the revelation is necessary to create the obligation to obedience.[6] As a final test of revelation, once it has been made known, it should provide a means for its effectual communication to all men. "It is a fair presumption, that the person through whom the communication was made should record it in writing."[7]

In the inspired writings of the Holy Scripture one has the record of God's revelation to man. To say that the Scripture is inspired is to say that the writers composed the work under so plenary and immediate an influence of the Holy Spirit that God speaks directly by them to man, not merely that they spoke to men in the name of God or by His authority.[8] The whole of the Bible was "dictated by the Holy Spirit with so full an influence, that it became truth without mixture of error, expressed in such terms as he himself ruled or suggested."[9]

That the Bible came to be written at all, that a later revelation was even necessary serves but to emphasize the extent of the fall of man. Indeed, there was never a time when the knowledge of God was not in the world,[10] since the first man held free conversation with God.[11] No people can plead ignor-

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5 Watson, op. cit., p. 88.
6 Loc. cit.
7 Ibid., p. 90.
8 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 11.
9 Ibid., p. 14.
10 Watson, Works, Vol. IV, p. 187.
11 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, P. 372.

ance, for Adam transmitted his knowledge to the early ancestors of all nations.[12] Therefore, human reason has no ground upon which to claim for itself the discovery of knowledge of God, nor even the improvement of that knowledge. On the contrary, the reasonings of man, because they were influenced by a corrupt heart, have darkened the truth man had.[13] Because of the love of sin, which in some form or other is found in every man in his natural and unregenerate state, man's judgment on all subjects of importance in religion has been blinded.[14]

Evidences of the loss of this former knowledge of God are clearly exhibited among the heathen. Watson examines three aspects of that evidence as indicative of the necessity of a revelation such as that which he describes.

1. Although some basic principles were known by the Ancients, their religious knowledge was insufficient and erroneous. It is true, there was some belief as to a supreme Being. The Hindus have such a Being, but they do not worship him or believe he concerns himself with human affairs.[15] The Greeks and Romans were so far confused as to believe matter to be eternal.[16] Even Plato, "beginning his discourse of the gods and the generation of the world, cautions his disciples 'not to expect anything beyond a likely conjecture concerning these things.'"[17]

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12 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 372.
13 Watson, Works, Vol. IV, p. 187.
14 Watson, Works, Vol. II, p. 211.
15 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 62ff.
16 Ibid., p. 63.
17 Ibid., p. 61.

2. The necessity of revelation is displayed in the moral state of the heathen.

> The notions of all civilized Heathens on moral subjects, like their knowledge of the first principles of religion, mingled as they were with their superstitions, prove that both were derived from a common source. . . This is an important consideration, inasmuch as it indicates the transmission of both religion and morals from the patriarchal system, and that both the primitive doctrines and their corresponding morals received early sanctions, the force of which was felt through succeeding ages.[18]

So far had their moral state degenerated that murder was made a pastime in Rome where men fought other men as well as wild beasts.[19] The destruction of children was not a crime,[20] and suicide was commended.[21] Meekness was a defect. Divorce was a matter of caprice.[22] Laws against theft and repine did not cover strangers.[23]

3. The necessity of revelation is also seen in the religion of the heathen. Its gloomy superstitions encouraged cruel dispositions.[24] The practice of human sacrifice was manifested among many of them.[25] Impurity, the product of their beliefs, was strengthened by the practices of their gods.[26]

After exhibiting the state of man and these other evidences which indicate the necessity of revelation, Watson

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18 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 75.
19 Ibid., p. 76.
20 Ibid., p. 77.
21 Ibid., p. 78.
22 Ibid., p. 79.
23 Ibid., p. 80.
24 Ibid., p. 82.
25 Loc. cit.
26 Ibid., p. 83.

professes that the revelation has been made in the Scriptures. Is it the true revelation? Is it valid? One need not wonder long, since, as he stated, the revelation must have its proof. What, then, is the proof of a revelation? "The evidence usually offered in proof of the divine authority of the Scriptures may be divided into external, internal, and collateral."[27]

1. It is his opinion that the authors of both the Jewish and Christian revelations profess to have authenticated their mission by two external proofs, miracles and prophecy.[28] A miracle he defines in the words of a Mr. Horne to be "an effect or event, contrary to the established constitution or course of things, or a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from, the known laws of nature, wrought either by the immediate act, or by the assistance, or by the permission, of God."[29] To this, however, he adds the last clause of Dr. Samuel Clarke's definition, "for the proof of evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person."[30] Thus, the performance of a miracle by God is for the specific purpose of authorizing a certain doctrine or the mission of an individual and constitutes proof of revelation. Watson is not completely satisfied with his definition and seeks to explain it. "In order to distinguish a real miracle, it is necessary that the common course of nature should be understood."[31] Perceiving the impossibility of completely understanding

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27 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 96.
28 Ibid., pp. 99-100.
29 Ibid., p. 101.
30 Loc. Cit.
31 Ibid., p. 104.

the "common course of nature," he suggests that the miracle should be manifested in "effects produced upon subjects whose properties have been the subject of common and long observation."[32] One wonders that he should be willing to leave his major proof of the validity of Scripture as revelation on such sandy grounds, since it was also a "subject of common and long observation" that the earth was flat and the sun revolved around it. Shifting his argument from the reality of miracles to their possibility, he says, "The possibility of miracles wrought by the power of God can be denied by none but Atheists or those whose systems are substancially atheistic."[33]

To sum up his case, he posits that all knowledge of God must be by revelation which is authenticated and accepted upon evidences, of which miracles are primary. The use of "miracles," as defined by him, however, assumes the acknowledgement of and knowledge of the power and nature of God, which is precisely the knowledge unknown without a revelation.

Prophecy is to be believed on the same grounds and for the same reasons. "No argument a priori against the possibility of prophecy can be attempted by anyone who believes in the existence and infinitely-perfect nature of God."[34] Again, is the prophecy to prove the revelation which makes known the nature of God, whom to know proves the prophecy?

2. Internal evidence also declares the validity of a revelation. By internal evidence he means:

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32 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 104.
33 Ibid., p. 102.
34 Ibid., p. 117.

> --that which arises from the consideration of the doctrines taught, as being consistent with the character of God and tending to promote the virtue and happiness of man; the ends for which a revelation of the will of God was needed, and for which it must be given, if it be considered as an act of grace and mercy.[35]

These words echo those of Clarke when he describes the function of human reason in its relation to the doctrines of Scripture as that of seeing "their perfect harmony among themselves, their agreement with the perfections of the divine nature, and their sovereign suitableness to the nature and state of man."[36] Thus, the use of reason he fails to notice in Clarke becomes his second proof of the validity of revelation, and strikingly similar to the first clause of his third.

3. "The collateral evidence of a revelation from God may be, its agreement in principle with every former revelation, should previous revelations have been vouchsafed."[37] This evidence is discovered if one discerns that a revelation "was obviously suited to the circumstances of the world at the time of its communication; that it is adapted to effect the great moral ends which it purposes, and has actually effected them; that if it contain a record of facts as well as of doctrines, those historical facts agree with the credible traditions and histories of the same times; that monuments, either natural or instituted, remain to attest the truth of its history; that adversaries have made concessions in its favor; and that, should

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35 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 121.
36 A. Clarke, Commentary on the New Testament, p. 2129.
37 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 129.

it profess to be a universal and ultimate revelation of the will and mercy of God to man, it maintains its adaptation to the case of the human race, and its efficiency, to the present day."[38] Any revelation which can claim these three categories of proofs may be accepted as authenticated by God, according to Watson.

How were Watson's ideas received in his own day? Jabez Bunting said of them:

> His statement of the Evidences of Christianity, in the First Part of his Theological Institutes, is comprehensive and convincing; and that portion of it which treats on the Proof from Miracles appears to me to be particularly accurate and discriminative.[39]

Since both of these eminent ministers and leaders of Wesleyan Methodism concurred, and since no outstanding Methodist voice was raised against them, one must conclude that Watson's views as to the necessity of revelation and the proofs of it were accepted and maintained among his brethren. The ideas were not new. They had been advocated by English theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They had been with equal vigor rejected by others. A century before Watson, Matthew Tindal had exposed the absurdity of making Christian teaching depend upon one's belief in miracles, and one's belief in miracles on the truth of the Christian teaching.[40] He might well have been speaking to Watson when he said, "It is an odd jumble to prove the truth of a book by the truth of the doctrine it

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38 Watson, Works, Vol IX, p. 129.

39 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," p. 28.

40 Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. I, pp. 78-79.

contains, and at the same time conclude these doctrines to be true because contained in that book."[41]

41 John Hunt, Religious Thought in England from the Reformation to the End of the Last Century, Vol. II, p. 445.

C. Uses of Reason in Matters of Religion.

Watson, in his dispute with Clarke, expounds the weak, fallible nature of human reason which incapacitates it as an agent for discovering religious truth. Such truth must be the subject of a revelation, which revelation has been given by God in the Holy Scripture. How can one be sure it is a true revelation? The revelation God has given bears within it the proofs by which one may be assured that it is valid. How is one to evaluate those proofs? Human reason is at this point placed in its rightful place. What, then, is the function of human reason and its proper uses in determining the things of religion? Watson derives his answer to the first part of the question from John Locke by way of John Wesley.

He admits with the Deist that "reason is the foundation of all certitude."[1] That certitude is to be gained by a process in which we inquire into the truth or falsehood of anything by comparing it with what we intuitively or by experience know to be true, or with that which we have formerly demonstrated to be so. "Rational proof, therefore, consists in the agreement or disagreement of that which is compared with truths already supposed to be established."[2] This idea was already in his mind when he wrote in answer to Clarke:

All reasoning is founded upon a comparison of

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 142.
2 Ibid., pp. 133-34.

> two or more things together, so as to ascertain an agreement or a disagreement, and to affirm or deny something respecting them. It may be compact or extended, as what is predicted of each is at once understood, or requires the introduction of intermediate ideas to show their relation; but in all cases it is essential to good reasoning, that we should have determinate ideas of the things themselves which are compared, in the respect in which a comparison is instituted, or we can never ascertain their relation to each other, or to any intermediate idea which may have a common relation to both. Between what I know, and what I imperfectly know, there can be no certain or complete comparison, and no determinate judgement.[3]

The foregoing outline of the manner of operation of reason is identical with one of the four functions attributed to it by John Wesley, namely, that of judgment. According to Wesley, a definition of reason must include two main facets. First, reason is something taken for argument, as one might say, "Give me a reason for your assertion." Secondly, and more important, reason is the same as understanding. By understanding, he means a faculty which exerts itself in three ways: by simple apprehension, by judgment, and by discourse. Simple apprehension is merely conceiving a thing in the mind, the most simple act of understanding. Judgment is the determining that things previously conceived either agree with or differ from each other. Discourse is the movement of the mind from one judgment to another.[4] John Wesley is not to be accused of decrying the use of reason. On the contrary, he finds in the Epistle to the Hebrews "a chain of reasoning or argumentation, so close, so solid, so regularly

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3 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, pp. 67-68.
4 Wesley, Works, Vol. VI, Sermon LXX, pp. 352-53.

connected," as not to be equalled "in all the productions of ancient and modern times."[5] He did, however, seek a mean between undervaluing and over-valuing reason. He does confess that John Locke has found something applicable to what he seeks, but Locke "does not come home to the point."[6]

Although Locke did not "come to the point" for the founder of Methodism, he did influence him. The similarity between the two men is manifested in Locke's four steps in the process of reasoning.

> The first and highest, is the discovering and finding out of truths; the second, the regular and methodical disposition of them, and laying them in a clear and fit order, to make their connexion and force be plainly and easily perceived; the third, is the perceiving their connexion; and the fourth, a making a right conclusion.[7]

These four steps were also adopted by one of Watson's favorite authors, one whom he often quotes, John Ellis, in his Knowledge of Divine Things.[8]

The relation between Watson and Locke is evident also in the limit placed on reason by the former when he says, "Between what I know and what I know not, there can be no comparison."[9] In like manner Locke declares that reason "fails us, where our ideas fail. It neither does, nor can, extend itself farther than they do. And, therefore, whenever we have no ideas

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5 Wesley, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 12.
6 Wesley, Works, Vol. VI, p. 352.
7 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, p. 512.
8 John Ellis, The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature, p. 55.
9 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, pp. 67-68.

our reasoning stops."[10]

In spite of the limitations of reason, Watson never intends to eliminate the uses of it from their rightful sphere in relation to revelation.[11] He does, however, insist that it be used in its moral sense, "humbly, under the sense of the weakness and imperfections of our own powers; and with docility, as being willing to receive truth at all hazards and sacrifices; and also devotionally, so that, accompanying our investigations with prayer to the 'Father of Lights,' we may be preserved from error, and led into all truth."[12]

What then are the legitimate, specific uses of reason in matters of religion? There are but two for the ordinary layman: the examination of the evidences claimed by revelation to establish its validity, and the interpretation of revelation once it is acknowledged as such. Reason has various other special uses when called into the service of divines. The first he refers to as an "intellectual use of our reason"[13] which consists in examining the evidences on which the revelation is founded in order to determine whether the proof of its divine authority is adequate and sufficient. The alleged miracles are to be examined to determine whether they are real or pretended. The testimony of witnesses must be investigated to determine whether the events they testify to actually occurred; and if the testimony is in the form of a written record, one must determine

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10 Locke, op. cit., p. 521.
11 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 46.
12 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 10.
13 Ibid., p. 9.

whether it was faithfully made and has been carefully and uncorruptedly preserved. With respect to professed prophecies, one must determine whether the prophecy be a real prediction of future events, or simply an ambiguous and equivocal saying capable of being understood in various ways; whether uttered privately or publicly; whether, if it were recorded, the record has been faithfully preserved.[14] This is the first valid use of reason. It is not to examine doctrines in order to decide by one's own opinions of their excellence whether or not they are from God; one may only inquire into the credentials of their messengers in quest of sufficient proof that God has spoken to mankind through them.[15] If reason finds those proofs that a revelation is from God to be in order, then the revelation is to be accepted in its entirety. In the words of a later Methodist writer, reason "consents to accept what it cannot itself verify."[16] Although, once a revelation has been accepted upon its proofs, reason is excluded from investigating its doctrines with any idea of choosing or rejecting them, there are many revealed doctrines to which it has pleased God to allow right reason to add its subsequent testimony.[17]

> The great Author of revelation has accompanied some of the doctrines of his word with rational evidence;. . .he has in no instance made reason a judge with the right of laying down the law of the case; but the appeal is made for our deeper conviction, and to render

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14 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, pp. 131-32.
15 Ibid., pp. 130-131.
16 W. B. Pope, A Compendium of Christian Theology, Vol. I, p. 45.
17 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 8.

> us the more inexcusable if we reject the doctrines thus laid down on the joint authority of their Author and their own evidence.[18]

Even if reason is not to be trusted as a judge of the doctrines of authenticated revelation, upon it is placed the duty of interpreting that revelation. In order to aid reason in this responsible undertaking, Watson suggests six rules or guides:

> The terms of the record are to be taken in their plain and commonly received sense; figures of speech are to be interpreted with reference to the local peculiarities of the country in which the agents who wrote the record resided; idioms are to be understood according to the genius of the language employed; if any allegorical or mystical discourses occur, the key to them must be sought in the book itself, and not in our own fancies; what is obscure must be interpreted by that which is plain; the scope and tenor of a discourse must be regarded, and no conclusions formed on passages detached from their context, except they are complete in their sense, or evidently intended as axioms and apophthegms.[19]

He acknowledges that some would include a seventh rule that when a revelation is sufficiently attested, nothing is to be deduced from it which is contrary to reason. Clarke's tenet noted previously approached such a statement, but differed in that he did not specify the interpretation of a doctrine of a sufficiently authenticated and accepted revelation. Watson views this rule with scepticism and warns that the reason of man is not to be confused with the reason of God. Truly, nothing can be revealed contradictory to the reason of God, "but

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18 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 73.
19 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 132.

it follows not from this that nothing should be contained in that revelation contradictory to the limited and often erring reason of man."[20] Watson does not appear to realize that he has changed the question from whether or not a deduction contrary to reason may be drawn from a revelation to whether or not a doctrine we cannot prove by our reason is thereby contradictory to the reason of God. The first concerns the liberties one may take in interpreting a given revelation. It assumes the revelation to be acted upon by the process of reasoning. The second assumes a given doctrine which may or may not be rationally related not to revelation but to the "reason of God." He continues, however, that such a rule may be admitted in all cases where we know the real nature of things. Again he issues a warning:

> 1. In all cases where the nature of things is not clearly and satisfactorily known, it cannot be affirmed that a doctrine contradicts them, and is therefore contrary to reason.
> 2. When that of which we would form a rational judgment is not itself distinctly apprehended, it cannot be satisfactorily compared with those things the nature of which we adequately know, and therefore it cannot be said to be contrary to reason.[21]

Reason has what may be called a more professional use for those men who devote themselves to the study and exposition of theology.[22] In their service it exhibits five special uses.

> 1. It aids in presenting the question at issue in its true form and thus detecting the sophistry of objectors.

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20 Watson, Works, Vol. IX, pp. 132-133.
21 Ibid., p. 138.
22 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 56.

2. It helps to prove the arguments of objectors to be false, on principles held by themselves and acknowledged by all men.
3. It serves to demonstrate that in a choice of difficulties the greater number, and most formidable, lie against the objectors.
4. It helps exhibit the evidences of the revelation.
5. It shows in how perfect a manner Christianity meets the wants and miseries of the human race.

Although such men may never suffer the charge of impartially applying their reason, they are lauded by Watson as the true heroes of both faith and reason.

Thus, Watson discloses what he considers to be the valid uses of reason. In a sentence, human reason must accept or reject in its totality the Holy Scripture as a revelation from God. If it accepts, it must protect and defend the usually approved interpretation of that revelation.

D. Perspective and Evaluation.

In their historical perspective the roots of Richard Watson's thinking are seen to lie both in and counter to the English theology of the latter part of the seventeenth and of the eighteenth centuries. By the last two decades of the seventeenth century reason had become the watchword of most English theologians.[1] This was true of the High Churchmen, Sharp, Patrick, and Scott, as well as of Stillingfleet, Tillotson, Tenison, and Burnet. Sharp affirmed that "we have no other way to judge or to be convinced of the truth of any matter of faith or article of religion but the agreeableness of it with the principles of our natural reason."[2] When revelation came, Stillingfleet says, "It brought nothing contrary to the principles of human nature, but did only rectify the depravations of it, and clearly show more that way which they had long been ignorantly seeking after."[3] This period has been called the golden age of English theology;[4] and for a time, at least, Christian theology and reason seemed to have formed an alliance.

The object of those men who discoursed on the certain-

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1 John Hunt, Religious Thought in England from the Reformation to the End of the Last Century, Vol. II, p. 194.

2 Ibid., p. 114. (From Sharp's Works, Vol. VII, p. 4.)

3 Ibid., p. 139. (From Stillingfleet, Origines Sacrae, p. 9.) In the thought of these men and that of their intellectual forefathers, Whichcote and Cudworth of Cambridge, one discerns the position advocated by Clarke.

4 Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. I, p. 79.

ty of natural religion was to establish a foundation for truth. They sought to use reason in the reconstruction of Christianity on its original basis. Thus, when Locke wrote his Reasonableness of Christianity, it was an effort to construct a system of Christianity from an open-minded reading of Scripture alone, without reference to the creeds. So great was his confidence in reason that he could say of those to whom the promise of the Messiah was never made manifest:

> Yet God had by the light of reason, revealed to all mankind, who would make use of that light, that He was good and merciful. . .He that made use of this candle of the Lord, so far as to find what was his duty, could not miss to find also the way to reconciliation and forgiveness, when he had failed of his duty.[5]

Watson would never have agreed that God had revealed himself to mankind "by the light of reason." To be a channel of revelation is not within the power of reason. It can only accept and interpret an authentic revelation proposed to it. On many points, however, Watson was guided by Locke. When Locke says:

> 'Tis plain in fact, that human reason unassisted, failed men in its great and proper business of morality,[6]

one hears the echo in Watson:

> Even if reason could deduce God's moral system, since most people are not, cannot, or will not be given to contemplation and reasoning, they would still have to be taught.[7]

In the conclusion that regardless of reason men would "still have to be taught" is demonstrated the basic difference between

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5 John Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures, pp. 255-56.
6 Ibid., p. 270.
7 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. IX, p. 21ff.

Watson and the later seventeenth century theologians. They had sought in reason a foundation for truth and certainty. They valued and trusted it not only because it bore testimony to the external revelation but also because that revelation seemed to confirm the conclusions of reason itself. Watson had no such trust. Man must still be taught; he must find certainty in an authority beyond himself.

At least four influences intervened between the seventeenth century and the manhood of Watson which caused him to have a lack of faith in reason. In the first place, David Hume extended Locke's rationalism to its conclusion which resulted in scepticism and the accompanying distrust of rational processes. Rather than assure a firm foundation, reason could only lead to doubt and uncertainty. Secondly, the flowering of Deism demonstrated that such a free use of reason resulted not in the adorning of the faith but in a "continual process of 'subtraction,' of a progressive thinning of the substance of Christianity."[8] Thirdly, by the third decade of the nineteenth century tremors were reaching England from German rationalism which was soon to inaugurate a new age in theology.[9] Fourthly, Watson matured in the Methodist society which was built by the life and work of John Wesley. Wesley himself never entered the arena either for or against reason. His main interests were in the souls and lives of men. By his own experience he discovered that one's soul is not saved nor one's life changed by a process of reasoning. That

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8 Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 355.
9 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 178.

does not imply that he decried the value of reason. "If you ask, what can reason do in religion? I answer, It can do exceeding much, both with regard to the foundation of it, and the superstructure,"[10] he said. "Employ it as far as it will go."[11] The salvation of the soul and the change of life whereby a sinner comes to desire and seek holiness depend not upon reason but upon a personal encounter with Jesus Christ which results in complete faith and trust in the power of Jesus to save and to change. Therefore, whatever reason may be able to do, it is unable to produce faith; and since it cannot produce faith, it is incapable of producing hope which springs from faith, or love which flows from both faith and hope.[12]

Because of these influences Watson found no assurance in reason as a discoverer of religious truth; therefore, men "still have to be taught." They must have an authority outside themselves, an infallible authority. God has given that infallible authority in the form of the inspired Holy Scripture. To question or reject the Scripture is to question and reject God. If one accepts God, he must accept His revelation intact. Thus, he sought to serve two ends. The first was essentially the same as that of the seventeenth century rationalists, an attempt to establish Christianity on a sure foundation. This foundation he asserted to be an infallible revelation rather than reason. The second was an effort to protect and keep equally inviolate all

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10 John Wesley, The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, Vol. VI, Sermon LXX, p. 354.

11 Ibid., p. 360.

12 Ibid., p. 355.

portions of the divinely inspired revelation.

Watson's treatment of this issue is of special interest as being the first systematic statement by a Methodist author. Did he speak for his fellow ministers and Methodists of his day? In so far as opinions have been recorded, they bear evidence that he did. James Dixon evaluated his work:

> We may say that bases of opinion, - rules of criticism and interpretation, claims of mental independence, irrespective of Divine authority and guidance, - somewhat after the manner of the German Rationalism, had begun to disturb the quiet faith of the Methodist body. All this turned upon one point, - the principles of reasoning; and these it was Mr. Watson's aim to place in their true light, and employ in their legitimate use.[13]

Jabez Bunting's approbation of his views has been previously noted. He further stated concerning the ideas on reason expressed in Watson's pamphlet in refutation of Clarke:

> More of just, and in some respects original thinking, seems to me to be there embodied, than can anywhere be found, as far as I recollect, on that subject.[14]

Watson was held in high regard for his defense of the divine authority of Scripture.

> Of the inspiration and consequent divine authority of the Scriptures , his conviction was deep, permanent, and influential. With him this was pre-eminently a practical principle; and hence he was decidedly opposed to all mere speculations in religion; and to all attempts to bring down the mysteries of God to the reason and prejudices of men, to explain away the plain and obvious import of the sacred writings, and to introduce novelties into the church of Christ.

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13 William Willan, Sermons and Outlines by the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 107.

14 Jabez Bunting, "Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson," p. 28.

> On all the vital doctrines of religion he was strictly orthodox.[15]

Only after the tide of theology had turned its flow did he have need of defenders. The voice of a reviewer was raised against him in the Methodist Quarterly Review for April, 1862.

> The reviewer says, "If reason is wholly incompetent to produce certitude when the existence of God is under consideration, it is equally incompetent to do this; if it cannot decide what a revelation from God should be, it cannot examine the seals thereof. In a word, if it cannot do the greater, it cannot do the less!"[16]

His defender insisted:

> Mr. Watson raises no objection to philosophers or philosophy properly so called; but to that "pride of science which borrows the discoveries of the Scriptures, and then exhibits itself as their rival, or affects to supply their deficiencies.". . .He objects to the dishonest and pernicious practice of stealing Scripture, and giving reason credit for the discovery thereof.[17]

Watson's opinions were held in esteem by his contemporaries. If theology has passed him by today, that does not diminish the fact that he helped meet the need of his own times by offering, instead of worn out rationalism, a confidence in Scripture upon which people could and did build their faith.

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15 The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, February, 1833, pp. 148-149.

16 John Levington, Watson's Theological Institutes Defended, p. 103.

17 Ibid., p. 98.

CHAPTER 2

THE EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

John Wesley, in spite of his voluminous writings, never produced a unified view of his ideas concerning the nature and existence of God. His controversy with George Whitfield called forth, in some degree, a delineation of his stand on the moral character and omnipotence of God. It remained for Watson, however, in his Theological Institutes to pen a complete statement of the Methodist position. In his own day that statement had a special significance for two reasons: it offered a theological foundation for young ministers coming into the Methodist connexion; and it made clear to the general public the Methodist views. Although Watson contributed nothing new in this field, his ideas are of interest to the student because of their unique place as the first Methodist statement. In this chapter, therefore, will be presented a brief outline of those ideas on the existence and attributes of God.

I. Existence of God.

Watson appeals first, as always, to the authority of the Scripture. He finds that in three ways the writers of the sacred word convey information concerning the existence and nature of God. By the names they give to Him they attest to His being and attributes, names such as "I Am," "Supporter," "Lord,"

"Judge."[1] By the acts they attribute to Him they teach that He alone is God, that He is present everywhere to govern and sustain all things, that His power is irresistible.[2] Finally, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they describe aspects of the nature of God, such as His being as a Spirit, the King, eternal, invisible.[3]

Actually, the Scripture never attempts to prove the existence of God. Neither Moses, whom he denominates as "the first of the inspired penmen," nor any succeeding authors exhibit such a proof; they assume God's existence as a truth commonly known and admitted. How then was the first knowledge of God's being made manifest? Did man make the discovery by the power of his own reason? No, says Watson. That erroneous idea is plainly refuted by the fact that the first man received knowledge by the simple act of conversing with God.[4] To debate, therefore, whether reason alone can or has discerned God as the First Cause is a fruitless effort. "We owe the knowledge of the existence of God, and of his attributes, to revelation alone";[5] but since that revelation has been made, the rational evidence for both is copious and irresistible. He proceeds to offer some of that evidence.

Nature, he observes, proceeds from causes to effects; but the most successful investigations of man concerning the existence of God proceed in the reverse order from effects to

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. IX, Theological Institutes, p. 363.
2 Ibid., p. 367.
3 Loc. cit.
4 Ibid., p. 372.
5 Ibid., p. 378.

cause. "Cause" is defined as "the supposed principle of change" and "effect" as the "change considered in relation to the principle of change whence it proceeded."[6] But what if David Hume were right? What if there is no instance in which one is able to perceive a necessary connexion between two successive events, or to relate one to the other as its cause? In order to eliminate this objection, Watson seeks the aid of Professor Stewart who makes the following distinction:

> The word "cause" is used, both by philosophers and the vulgar, in two senses, which are widely different. When it is said, that every change in nature indicates the operation of a cause, the word "cause" expresses something which is supposed to be necessarily connected with the change, and without which it could not have happened. This may be called the metaphysical meaning of the word; and such causes may be called metaphysical or efficient causes. In natural philosophy, however, when we speak of one thing being the cause of another, all that we mean is, that the two are consistently conjoined; so that when we see the one, we may expect the other. . .The causes which are the object of our investigation in natural philosophy may, for the sake of distinction, be called physical causes.[7]

In Watson's opinion, if Hume's doctrine denies the above deliniated "efficient causes," it contradicts all consciousness and the experiences founded upon it." If it is to be understood only in relation to "physical causes," "it either confounds them with efficient causes, or says, in paradoxical language, only what has been better said by others, and that without any danger of involving either absurd or dangerous consequences."[8] He there-

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6 Watson, op. cit., p. 379.
7 Ibid., p. 381. (From Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, by Stewart.)
8 Ibid., p. 384.

upon assumes Hume to be referring to the latter and concludes that it is of little consequence to the argument as to the existence of a supreme First Cause whether the succession of events among physical causes has a necessary connexion or not.[9] In reality, Watson has not attempted to answer Hume's doctrine but has only denied it and altered its meaning.

After having satisfied himself that Hume offers no great difficulty, he continues to propound the a posteriori argument for the existence of God. In this he is guided extensively by Locke, Howe, Samuel Clarke, and Paley. The first argument is drawn from the fact of one's own actual existence and the existence of those around him. He presents Locke's argument as follows:

> Every man knows with absolute certainty, that he himself exists. He knows also that he did not always exist, but began to be. It is clearly certain to him that his existence was caused, and not fortuitous; and was produced by a cause adequate to the production.[10]

God alone is the only cause "adequate to the production" of man; therefore, because I am, God must exist. He quotes extensively from Howe's Living Temple in exhibiting the a posteriori proofs for the self-existence, eternity, and self-activity of the First Cause, God.[11] From both Samuel Clarke and Howe he gleans proof of the intelligence of God.[12] Again from Howe and Paley he adopts

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9 Watson, on. cit., p. 381.
10 Ibid., p. 387.
11 Ibid., pp. 387-393
12 Ibid., p. 394.

their statement of the proof for the existence of God from the fact of motion.[13] Thus, he concludes, the proof of the being of God may rest wholly upon a posteriori arguments and needs no other. Lest the power of reason be too highly exalted by this victory, he adds:

> Even with this safe and convincing process of reasoning at our command, we shall find at every step of an inquiry into the divine nature, our entire dependence upon divine revelation for our primary light; that both must originate our investigations, and conduct them to a satisfactory result.[14]

Although he considers no other proof to be necessary, Watson introduces his readers to the one founded on a priori reasoning, a process which he ranks among the over-zealous attempts of the advocates of truth. He doubts whether any atheist has ever been converted by this proof. If the line of a posteriori argument is from effect to cause, that of a priori is the reverse, from cause to effect. If God be considered as the First Cause, then how could there be a "cause" of the First Cause? Nothing is prior to God. Samuel Clarke, however, made a search for the ground or reason for the First Cause. After proving by a posteriori reasoning the existence of the First Cause from the existence of dependent beings, he continued to demonstrate the necessity which compelled the being of the First Cause.[15] Watson explains that the true idea of the necessary existence of God is to be understood that "he thus exists because it is his nature, as an independent and uncaused being,

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13 Watson, op. cit., p. 400ff.
14 Ibid., p. 460.
15 Ibid., p. 454.

to be; his being is necessary, because it is underived; not underived, because it is necessary."[16]

II. Attributes of God.

Watson proceeds to demonstrate the attributes of God which it has pleased Him to reveal to men. In every case Watson first leads his readers to the Scripture to the passages in which he finds the qualities he affirms. Only after verifying them as objects of revelation does he proceed to give the rational ground upon which they are to be received.

1. Unity - The unity of God acknowledged by Scripture is further discerned by reference to the nature of the divine existence and the divine work. God, by His very being, is the independent First Cause. It is impossible to conceive of two or more equally independent and absolute beings, two First Causes. An even more satisfying argument he finds in the contemplation of the absolute perfection of God.[17] The divine work testifies to God's unity. If two independent powers of equal power had concurred to create the world, good and evil would be equal; but good predominates. Furthermore, evil is subjected to good.[18] Therefore, God's unity is maintained; and the certainty of His oneness is the basis of all true religion.[19]

2. Spirituality - The spirituality of God is attested to by both the Scripture and reason. He is spirit, not body; mind, not matter. He is:

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16 Watson, op. cit., p. 459.
17 Ibid., p. 464.
18 Ibid., p. 467.
19 Ibid., p. 470.

> "The invisible God whom no man hath seen or can see;" an immaterial, incorruptible, impassible substance; an immense mind or intelligence, self-acting, self-moving, wholly above the perception of bodily senses; free from the imperfections of matter, and all the infirmities of corporeal beings; far more excellent than any finite and created spirits because their Creator, and therefore styled, "the Father of spirits," and "the God of the spirits of all flesh."[20]

If one allows that there is a First Cause, one must also admit that Cause to be intelligent. Since intelligence is not a property of organized matter[21] nor even life,[22] it must be a property of the spirit. Therefore, an intelligent being must be a spiritual being.[23]

3. Eternity - God is eternal, as is declared in the Scripture, "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." As to the nature and duration of that eternity, some people to their confusion and that of others proclaim it to be an eternal and fixed Now, from which all ideas of succession, of past and future, are excluded.[24] Watson regards this as a misconception.

> If the duration of the divine Being admits not of past, present, and future, one of these two consequences must follow, - that no such attribute as that of eternity belongs to him, or that there is no power in the human mind to conceive of it. In either case, the Scriptures are greatly impugned; for "He who was, and is, and is to come," is a revelation of the eternity of God, which is then in no sense true.[25]

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20 Watson, op. cit., p. 471.
21 Ibid., p. 475.
22 Ibid., pp. 479-480.
23 Ibid., p. 472.
24 Ibid., p. 490-491.
25 Ibid., p. 494.

4. Omnipotence - This attribute is exhibited in Scripture in those passages which present God as the author of all creation, the sustainer, orderer, and controller of powerful and unruly elements;[26] for "By him all things consist." His is the Power from which all other power is derived, and to which it is subordinate. There are, however, two limitations to the power of God. Watson agrees with Bishop Wilkins that where things imply a contradiction in themselves, as that a body may be in a place and not in that place at the same time, such things cannot be done by God since contradictions are impossible by their very nature.[27] He further concurs with Pearson that God cannot do anything inharmonious with his other perfections. "He cannot lie, nor deceive, nor deny himself; for this would be injurious to his truth. He cannot love sin, nor punish innocence; for this would destroy his holiness and goodness."[28]

5. Omnipresence - In a felicitous passage Watson says:

> In the Scriptures there is nothing confused in the doctrine of the divine ubiquity. God is everywhere, but he is not everything. All things have their being in him, but he is distinct from all things; he fills the universe, but is not mingled with it. He is the intelligence which guides, and the power which sustains; but his personality is preserved, and he is independent of the works of his hands, however vast and noble. So far is his presence from being bounded by the universe itself, that, as we are taught in the passage above quoted from the Psalms, were it possible for us to wing our way into the immeasurable depths and

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26 Watson, op. cit., p. 496.
27 Ibid., p. 499.
28 Ibid., p. 500.

> breadths of space, God would there surround us, in as absolute a sense as that in which he is said to be about our bed and our path, in that part of the world in which his will has placed us.[29]

In relation to omnipresence, he insists that the terms "presence" and "place" be understood in their commonly accepted sense on the ground that the Holy Spirit would have chosen other words if he had not approved of the meaning of those two. This attribute also bears its rational evidence. It must be acknowledged that a being cannot act where it is not. If, therefore, actions which manifest the highest wisdom, power, and goodness are continually produced everywhere, the author of the actions, God, must be continually present in all places.[30] He also presents the a priori argument, but expresses his doubt as to its value.[31] Briefly, it may be stated as follows: There is a First Cause independent of other causes and, therefore, unlimited, which exists by necessity of nature. Since parts of space are uniform, if he exists in one such part, he must exist in all. His presence in some space is seen by his wisdom and power; therefore, he must be present everywhere.

6. Omniscience - After affirming by Scripture the omniscience of God, Watson confronts the question of that omniscience as it relates to man's free will. To the statement of some who say it is a matter of choice for God to think finite ideas he gives this answer. Firstly, that God should choose to know some things and not to know others supposes a reason for

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29 Watson, op. cit., p. 503.
30 Ibid., p. 505.
31 Ibid., p. 509.

his refusal. The reason must arise from the nature of the thing. It is, therefore, implied that he must have at least a partial knowledge of the circumstance in order to have reason for refusing to know it. Secondly, if men have been held responsible for those events which were foretold by the Prophets, and if in those cases man's free will has been reconciled to God's omniscience, no other case should prove more difficult.[32] To those who claim foreknowledge of contingent events to be by nature a contradiction, he replies by simply denying that foreknowledge implies influence upon the freedom or certainty of an action. He does this by defining "contingent" as an antonym of "necessity" but not of "certainty."[33] To those who assert that God's foreknowledge is so different from human perception that it is not a subject for argument, he points out that they merely shift the difficulty of reconciling foreknowledge with contingent events rather than remove it.[34] Besides, their attitude is dangerous since by it we can have no sure revelation of God in the Scripture.[35] In regard to this attribute, Watson follows his own dictum for the use of reason by divines in showing the difficulties confronting his objectors; but he never presents a positive case of his own.

7. Immutability - God's immutability is clearly described in Scripture in those passages which speak of His counsel standing fast forever and His mercy enduring forever. It is

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32 Watson, Works, Vol. X, Theological Institutes, p. 11.
33 Ibid., p. 14.
34 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
35 Ibid., p. 25.

further discerned in the orderliness of nature,[36] the moral government[37] of God, and the perfection of His nature.[38]

> In his being and perfections, God is therefore eternally the same. He cannot cease to be; he cannot be more perfect, because his perfection is absolute; he cannot be less so, because he is independent of all external power, and has no internal principle of decay.[39]

Allied to God's immutability is His liberty which is realized in its most noble manner only as one perceives that His unchangeableness is the result of His own will and moral excellence.[40]

8. Wisdom - This attribute is ascribed to God in the Scripture as He is referred to as "the only wise God." The character of His wisdom is displayed: in the design in creation;[41] in the way He always acts for worthy ends;[42] by the fact that the process by which His work is accomplished is simple, for example, the production of seasons and varied temperatures merely by giving an inclination to the earth's axis;[43] by the infinite variety of His works;[44] by the connexion and dependence of His works;[45] by the adaptation of means to ends, for example, an oyster is fixed to a rock while a herring swims the sea, but the power of neither is deficient;[46] by the fact that He allows nations and states to govern themselves;[47] and finally, in the means by which offending men are reconciled to Him.[48]

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36 Watson, Works, Vol. X, p. 40.
37 Ibid., p. 41.
38 Ibid., pp. 42-43.
39 Ibid., p. 43.
40 Ibid., p. 48.
41 Ibid., p. 50.
42 Loc. cit.
43 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
44 Ibid., p. 52.
45 Ibid., p. 54.
46 Ibid., p. 55.
47 Loc. cit.
48 Ibid., p. 56.

9. Goodness - The goodness of God is abundantly avowed of God in Scripture. His goodness of nature is one of His essential perfections. It is displayed in the pleasure He takes in the exercise of benevolence and mercy.[49] What of the relation of His goodness to the presence of evil? Watson distinguishes between those evils which are self-inflicted and those which are inevitable,[50] and the majority fall into the former category. The evil which does exist does not do so necessarily.

> It is, indeed, a proof of the divine goodness, to bring good out of evil. . .The true key to the whole subject is furnished by divine revelation. Sin has entered the world. Man is under the displeasure of his Maker. Hence we see natural evils, and punitive acts of the divine administration, not because God is not good, but because he is just as well as good.[51]

How did moral evil come to be? In answer to this question Watson quotes Wesley to show that it is the result of voluntary abuse of the will on the part of rational and moral agents.[52] Those who have thus offended God may hope to find an expression of His goodness in His willingness to pardon.[53]

10. Holiness - Since it is manifested that "the Lord loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity," it must be concluded that this preference for one and hatred of the other flow from a principle of His nature; this principle is holiness.[54] The expression of God's holiness is found in the two branches of justice and truth. Of the particular aspects of justice there are

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49 Watson, Works, Vol. X, p. 59.
50 Ibid., p. 67.
51 Ibid., pp. 71-72.
52 Ibid., p. 83.
53 Ibid., p. 91.
54 Ibid., p. 96.

two. Firstly, legislative justice determines man's duty, binds him to the performance of it, and defines the rewards and punishments of obedience or disobedience.[55] Secondly, distributive justice, which respects rewards and punishment, assures one that God renders to men according to their works.[56] The truth of God is contemplated by the sacred writers in the two aspects of veracity and faithfulness. "It forms the basis of all religion, to know the true God, and to know that God is true."[57]

The purpose of this chapter has been to present a concise, clear statement of Watson's position on the existence and attributes of God. In accordance with his faith that the only knowledge man may have of God is that which God has revealed of Himself by His inspired penmen, he assumes both the existence of God and those qualities of nature attributed to him. The arguments which occupy so great a part of his thought, with due respect for consistency, must be viewed as weapons in the hand of that faith. One is reminded that he visited a Methodist chapel in his fourteenth year in search of "points" to use in debating the quinquarticular controversy. So, in his later years, he offered to his brethren weapons with which to defend their faith. He adorned the arsenal with no novelty but, rather, polished the pieces and presented them for action. For the arguments themselves he was indebted to the English theologians of the latter seventeenth and of the eighteenth

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55 Watson, Works, Vol. X, p. 97.
56 Ibid., p. 98.
57 Ibid., p. 104.

centuries, as his numerous quotations show. His repeated dependence upon those same theologians indicates the strength of the bond between the Methodist societies and the Church of England in spite of the Methodist separation from that body. It was this which caused Watson to deny that Methodists were Dissenters.

CHAPTER 3

ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST

A. Refutation of Adam Clarke.

In the years immediately following the death of John Wesley the harmony of the Methodist societies was more than once turned into discord on matters of ecclesiastical policy. The peace of their theological life was maintained, however, until the publication of the final volume of Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament caused the first major eruption of dissension. In his notes, particularly on Luke 1:35, Clarke denied the eternal Sonship of Christ, thus affording cause for disagreement among his brethren. Watson's voice was heard above all others in his protest and defense of the orthodox view. The controversy has long since been laid to rest in the quiet pages of history; and the combatants are now largely remembered (or forgotten) on the ground of other merits. In 1818, though, the discussions gave rise to much heat, and a measure of light. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine the controversy, the part Watson played in it, and the development of his thoughts on the question at issue. This will be done in two divisions: 1. an examination of the controversy, including the statement of Clarke's view and Watson's case against him; 2. Watson's mature, positive development of his doctrine as exhibited in the sections of his Theological Institutes which later dealt with the eternal

Sonship of Christ. In conclusion, there will be an attempt to place Watson's view in its historical perspective and evaluate his contribution.

A. Refutation of Adam Clarke.

As early as 1810 when the first volume of Clarke's Commentary on the Bible reached the public, Methodist eyebrows were raised over his idea that the serpent in the creation story was in reality a baboon. In general people only smiled; and one minister asked of another, "Must we now say, -'As Moses lifted up the baboon in the wilderness?'"[1] The smile had given way to a frown of suspicion on the part of some by 1815 when Bramwell wrote to Bunting, "It is written by several of the brethren that his Commentary is tending to heterodoxy."[2] The suspicion was fully realized in 1818 when Clarke, in his note on Luke 1:35, denied that Christ could have been the eternal Son of God on the ground that such a notion was antiscriptural and impaired the divinity of Christ. Christ's Sonship, he asserted, was to be understood as relating to the human aspect of His nature rather than the divine. A cry was lifted against Clarke by the orthodox among his brethren. Only nineteen years previously a Methodist, James Sikes of Whitehaven, had been expelled from the society for affirming essentially the same thing, that whereas Christ's soul was begotten before the world, his body was born

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1 T. P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, D. D., Vol. 1, p. 364.

2 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 80.

in the world, which constituted his Sonship.[3] Such a course of action was never considered in relation to Clarke, however. He was held in high esteem in spite of his deviation from orthodoxy. Along with Joseph Benson he was regarded as one of Methodism's great scholars. It was precisely this appreciation of Clarke in conjunction with the acknowledged influence of his voice in theological matters which led some to fear the outcome of his expression of disregard for the accepted view. Therefore, a series of pamphlets were produced by which various ministers attempted to defend the eternal Sonship of Christ and preserve the theological unity of the Methodist body.

Moore, who had been a companion of John Wesley's, expressed himself in opposition to Clarke.[4] In defense of the doctrine he drew what he considered to be proofs from Scripture, Wesley's hymns, the Church Fathers, and the Nicene Creed. His work met with little approval, and a later critic confessed that it carried no conviction.[5] In reply to Moore, Thomas Exley took up his pen and defended Clarke.[6] Hare entered the ranks

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3 David Williamson, "The Doctrine of the Churches of England and Scotland, &c., with Respect to the Eternal Son-Ship of Christ, and the Procession of the Holy Ghost, Shewn to be Clearly Founded on Scripture," p. 10.

4 Henry Moore, "Thoughts on the Eternal Sonship of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity."

5 Stephen Brunskill, "Thoughts on the Divinity and Sonship of Jesus Christ," p. 7.

6 Thomas Exley, "A Vindication of Dr. Adam Clarke, in Answer to Mr. Moore's Thoughts on the Eternal Sonship of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Addressed to the People Called Methodists, Late in Connexion with the Rev. John Wesley, Deceased, and Especially to the Preachers in that Connexion."

against the doctor.[7]

Watson was at first reluctant to express himself on the matter, even though he felt strongly about it. He was restrained for a number of reasons. In the first place, he admired the devotional sections of Clarke's Commentary and continued to do so throughout his whole life. Just before he died, he professed them to be "the finest compositions of the kind" that he had ever read.[8] He was further restrained by the general appreciation for Clarke. The circumstances of his own past history also gave him cause to pause. He had retired from the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion in 1801 with the taint of heresy associated with his name. He had not returned until 1812 and had, therefore, been a minister in connexion with the Conference again only six years.[9] Despite these disadvantages, he submitted to the public a lengthy pamphlet entitled, "Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Christ; and the use of Reason in Matters of Revelation: suggested by several passages in Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament. In a letter to a Friend." The friend to whom the pamphlet was addressed was Rev. Thomas Galland, A. M., of Queen's College, Cambridge, who had recently been admitted to the Wesleyan itinerancy.[10] The publication made an immediate and deep impression. It determined Watson's rank

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7 Edward Hare, "An Apology for Continuing in the Steadfast Belief of the Eternal Sonship of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In a Letter to the Rev. Joseph Benson."

8 Samuel Dunn, The Life of Adam Clarke, p. 161.

9 Thomas Jackson, Memoirs of the Life and Writing of the Rev. Richard Watson, p. 261.

10 Ibid., p. 262.

at once as a profound theologian,[11] and was viewed as "a giant wrestling with a giant."[12] Thomas Exley again defended Clarke and produced a purported refutation of Watson's arguments.[13]

Clarke himself never publicly answered any of his critics. Throughout the entire matter he conducted himself in a manner becoming to his character. Shortly thereafter, when the publication of Southey's Life of Wesley was deemed to require an answer, it was Clarke who declared to the Conference that in his opinion Watson was the man best fitted to undertake that responsible task.[14] Although the two men differed on the question of the eternal Sonship, that difference did not stand between them; they remained friends until they died within six months of one another.

What were the opinions of Clarke which precipitated the dissension? They were found in the notes in his Commentary on Luke 1:35 and certain of the concluding principles appended to the Commentary.

> And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall over-shadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. Luke 1:35

In reference to the "Son of God" Clarke avows that the angel does

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11 Abel Stevens, The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century Called Methodism, p. 202.

12 Richard Watson Dixon, The Life of James Dixon, p. 81.

13 Thomas Exley, "Reply to Mr. Watson's Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Christ; and the Use of Reason in Matters of Revelation, Suggested by several Passages in Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament."

14 Jackson, op. cit., p. 265.

not here give that appellation to the divine nature of Christ but to the holy thing, το ἅγιον, which was to be born of the Virgin by the energy of the Holy Spirit.

> The divine nature could not be born of the Virgin; the human nature was born of her. The divine nature had no beginning; it was God manifested in the flesh, I. Timothy 3:16; it was that word which being in the beginning (from eternity) with God, John 1:2, was afterwards made flesh (became manifested in human nature), and tabernacled among us, John 1:14.[15]

For a clear understanding of Christ one must clearly distinguish between His divine nature, as above affirmed, and His human nature, "in reference to which he is the Son of God and inferior to him, Mark 13:32, John 5:19, 14:28."[16] He concludes that the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ is "anti-scriptural and dangerous" for at least five reasons. Firstly, he fails to find an express declaration of it in Scripture. Secondly, if one assumes Christ to be the Son of God as to His divine nature, He cannot be eternal; for son implies a father; and a father implies, in reference to his son, precedency in time if not in nature as well. Thirdly, if one assumes Christ to be the Son of God as to His divine nature, then the Father is necessarily prior and consequently superior to him. Fourthly, if the divine nature were begotten of the Father, then there was a period when it did not exist and a period when it began to exist. Fifthly, to say the divine nature was begotten from all eternity is an absurdity; for the phrase "eternal Son" is within itself

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15 Adam Clarke, Commentary on the New Testament, on Luke 1:35.

16 Loc. cit.

a contradiction.[17]

In four of the concluding principles of the Commentary Clarke elaborates on his position.

> In due time the Divine Logos, called afterward Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior, etc., became incarnated, and sojourned among men, . . . This Divine Person foretold by the prophets, and described by the evangelists and apostles, is really and properly God; having by the inspired writers, assigned to him every attribute essential to the Deity; being one with him who is called God, Jehovah, etc.
>
> He is also perfect man in consequence of his incarnation, and in that man or manhood dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; so that his nature is twofold - divine and human, or God manifested in the flesh.
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> His human nature is derived from the blessed Virgin Mary, through the creative energy of the Holy Ghost; but his divine nature, because God, infinite and eternal, is uncreated, underived, and unbegotten; which were it otherwise, he could not be God in any proper sense of the word; but as he is God, the doctrine of the eternal Sonship must be false.[18]

Although these views were objectionable to most of his fellow ministers, Clarke was not alone in holding them.[19]

In what manner and with what effect did Watson proceed in answering and refuting Clarke's arguments? He begins by asking this question: Are the names "Son" and "Son of God," and other titles of similar significance in the New Testament, to be understood, in every instance, as designations of Christ's human nature, with reference to His miraculous conception; or

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17 Clarke, op. cit., on Luke 1:35.

18 Ibid., p. 2128.

19 Richard Treffry, Jr., An Inquiry into the Doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ, p. 42. Treffry points out that similar views were expressed in the following publications: Wakefield, Inquiry Concerning the Person of Christ H. Taylor, Ben Mordecai's Letters; S. Drew, On the Divinity of Christ; Stuart, Letters to Channing.

are they used as appellations of His divine nature in reference to His personal existence in the Trinity and His eternal relation to God as the Father? He perceives that if Scripture may be used to demonstrate that the term "Son of God" was applied to the divine nature of Christ, either separately or in direct contrast to His human nature, then Clarke's position will be refuted.[20] He is certain that such an application of the term is discernible in Scripture; but whether it is or not, in conjunction with his third use of reason in the service of divines, he affirms:

> If we cannot establish the eternal Sonship of Christ, as the express doctrine of Scripture, no man can bring evidence from Scripture to contradict it.[21]

To Clarke's first statement that he refuses to believe the doctrine of the eternal Sonship because Scripture makes no "express declaration" concerning it, Watson replies that a similar lack of "express declaration" does not prevent him from believing in three Persons as one God, nor two natures in one person, nor the validity of infant baptism.[22] He then proceeds to attempt to destroy Clarke's argument by proving that the divine nature of Christ is referred to by Scripture in reference to his being a Son of God. In order to do this, he offers three main categories of evidence: 1. those passages in which the term "only-begotten" are interpreted as referring to Christ's divine nature; 2. application of the term "Father" to the first Person

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20 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 6.
21 Ibid., p. 13.
22 Ibid., p. 5.

of the Trinity in relation to the second Person as "Son";
3. and those passages in which the name, "Son of God," is to be understood as definitely denoting the divine nature.

1. In the first place, "only - begotten" must in some instances be interpreted as referring to the divine nature.

> And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14.

In this verse Watson posits that Clarke must either acknowledge the glory seen by the apostles to have been the glory of Christ's human nature, of which he can find no evidence, or he must admit that glory to have been that of a higher nature, which nature is called "the only begotten of the Father."[23]

> No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. John 1:18.

If "the only begotten Son" here refers to the human nature of Christ, then there is an apparent contradiction in the text.[24] Watson quotes other passages to the same end.

Secondly, Christ was called "only begotten" not only because of His miraculous birth. After all, Adam was also made immediately by God, but in no instance is he spoken of as "begotten."[25]

Thirdly, if in John 3:16 the use of "only begotten" does not refer to the whole compound nature of Christ, then the expression of God's love to the world is greatly diminished.

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23 Watson, op. cit., p. 8.
24 Ibid., p. 7.
25 Ibid., p. 9.

> It is by the existence of the tender relations of the Father and Son, in the first and second persons of the Trinity, that the love which redeemed the guilty is heightened as much beyond our conception, as the love of the Father to the Son is beyond it.[26]

2. Another proof he finds in the application of the name "Father" to the first Person of the Trinity. To deny the essential paternity of the First Person is to take away all the meaning of "Father" as applied to Him in the Trinity. If He is Father at all, He must be Father of the divine nature of Christ, since the human nature was produced by the Third Person in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.[27]

3. An examination of the passages in which the appellation, "Son of God," occurs, Watson feels, proves that in none of them is it given to the divine nature of Christ in contradistinction to his humanity. If any of them refer directly to His divinity, Clarke is refuted. He proceeds to exhibit those which make such a reference and, thereby, invalidate Clarke's argument.

> Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Romans 1:3,4.

An opposition is here expressed between what Christ was according to the flesh and what He was according to a higher nature. It is obvious that "the nature put in opposition to the fleshly nature can be no other than the divine nature of Christ, the apostolic

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26 Watson, op. cit., p. 10.
27 Ibid., p. 12.

designation of which is, 'the Son of God.'"[28] He gives another example in the calling of Nathaniel by Jesus (John 1:44ff.). Nathaniel could not have called him "Son of God" because of his miraculous birth, for he knew nothing of it. He gave him that name because Jesus had exercised a divine attribute. He had seen Nathaniel and known his actions when Nathaniel had not been in His company. It was, therefore, the divine nature to which Nathaniel referred.[29] Watson examines other passages to the same end, such as Peter's confession (Matthew 16:16-18), the affirmation of Christ's Sonship by his works (John 14:11), and the affirmation of the man who had been born blind (John 9:35-38). Thus, Watson presented his case in refutation of Clarke.

Watson's pamphlet was immediately circulated and so widely read that a second edition was required after two weeks.[30] For the most part, the opinions created by the publication were favorable to Watson. He was heralded as an "able divine and a profound thinker."[31] Even Clarke's biographer later suggested that if anyone would master the subject, they should study Watson's "Remarks."[32] So influential was the pamphlet that at the following Conference a resolution was passed to admit no candidate to the ministry who denied "the divine and eternal Sonship of Christ."[33] To the credit of Clarke, it is noted by

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28 Watson, op. cit., p. 14.
29 Ibid., p. 17.
30 Jackson, op. cit., p. 265.
31 Loc. cit.
32 J. W. Etheridge, The Life of the Rev. Adam Clarke, p. 331.
33 Stevens, op. cit., p. 202.

his biographer that after the Conference had thus pronounced on the matter, when he was elected President of the Conference, he was studiously exact in eliciting from every candidate for ordination his statement of agreement on the point.[34] Not all opinion was for Watson, however. Samuel Drew, who shared Clarke's views, wrote to a friend that during a fortnight's trip he noticed "a decided majority in favor of Dr. Clarke."[35] It hardly seems likely that the Conference would have passed its resolution, however, if this had been an impartial observation. To Thomas Exley, Clarke's defender, Watson's "Remarks" "evince him to be neither a good logician, nor a sound critic."[36] James Dixon, who was destined to become Watson's son-in-law, was uncertain as to which of the two men was most convincing.

> Whichever of these two great men is right I cannot say. However, Watson has taken up the subject, as all such subjects ought to be, taken up, as a matter of pure revelation.[37]

Did Watson refute Clarke? Again, the two men have addressed themselves to different problems. Clarke confronted the dilemma of reconciling the concept of the perfect divinity of Christ with the imperfections implied in the concept of sonship. To him, the two posed an insoluble contradiction to the mind. As a solution he declared that the idea of sonship applied to the created human nature of Christ; thus Christ's perfect di-

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34 Etheridge, op. cit., p. 332.
35 J. H. Drew, The Life, Character, and Literary Labours of Samuel Drew, p. 287.
36 Exley, op. cit., p. 61.
37 R. W. Dixon, op. cit., p. 82.

vinity was defended from the implied imperfections of sonship. Watson addressed himself to the question of whether or not the Scripture ever attributes sonship to that nature of Christ which is more than human. He offered what he considered to be conclusive evidence that it did. If one agrees with Watson's interpretations of the passages he called forth, then one will agree that Clarke's solution is untenable. After indicating that Clarke had reached a wrong conclusion, Watson should then have faced the dilemma of reconciling the apparent contradiction which was Clarke's basic affirmation, that divinity and sonship are mutually exclusive of one another. Actually, Watson saw no cause for approaching that issue. For him there was no dilemma. If the Scripture indicated that Christ was the Son of God as to His divine nature, then no apparent contradiction could cause him to doubt that He was the eternal Son of God. At this stage, therefore, Watson merely affirmed that Christ was both perfectly divine and eternally God's Son. His positive thought was left to the development of his Theological Institutes.

B. Statement of Mature Position.

After having examined Watson's case against the denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ, one must explore his positive position for the Sonship. This position he developed in his Theological Institutes. Although he does not deal with the question in this order, his thought may be outlined in the following manner: 1. a statement of the importance of the doctrine; 2. the answering of further objections raised against the doctrine; 3. presentation of Old Testament texts which testify to the doctrine; 4. presentation of New Testament passages which do the same; 5. and the testimony of reason on the matter.

Watson admits that the question of the eternal Sonship of Christ is of itself not a fundamental issue. Those who hold the divinity of Christ and yet deny his eternal Sonship, if they carry their views to a logical conclusion, must eventually find themselves at odds with the orthodox in all ages on an issue which is fundamental, however, namely, that of the Trinity.[1] In addition to this, he finds at least five other considerations which accentuate the significance of the doctrine. In the first place, it must either be accepted, or the passages which speak of Christ as the Son of God must be loosely explained.[2] Secondly, the affirmation of the doctrine is essential to the maintenance

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. X, p. 257.
2 Loc. cit.

of proper relations among the Persons of the Godhead.[3] Thirdly, it is the doctrine of the divine paternity alone which preserves the scriptural idea that the Father "is the fountain of Deity; and, as such, the first, the original, the principle."[4] Watson does not linger on the rational difficulties involved in maintaining the "eternal" Sonship in opposition to the Father as "the fountain of Deity," "the first." Fourthly, he believes the doctrine of the eternal Sonship necessary in upholding "the scriptural doctrines of the perfect equality of the Son, so that he is truly God, equal in glory and perfection to the Father, being of the same nature, and, at the same time, of the subordination of the Son to the Father, so that he should be capable of being sent."[5] Fifthly, and most important, the idea of the love of God as a Father in the gift of His Son has no real meaning unless that Father-Son relationship is maintained in the Godhead.[6] Thus, he might have sung with Charles Wesley:

> O Love divine! what hast Thou done?
> The immortal God hath died for me!
> The Father's co-eternal Son
> Bore all my sins upon the tree;
> The immortal God for me hath died!
> My Lord, my Love is crucified.[7]

Watson addresses himself to three objections which were raised against the eternal Sonship. Some people claim, he says, that the title of Son was assumed by Christ and given to Him by His disciples because of His miraculous birth. That this is an erroneous interpretation is seen by the fact that Jesus himself

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3 Watson, op. cit., p. 257.
4 Ibid., p. 258.
5 Ibid., p. 259.
6 Loc. cit.
7 The Methodist Hymn-Book, p. 186, Charles Wesley.

remained completely silent as to the nature of his birth.[8] Furthermore, when Peter confessed Him to be the Son of God, no mention was made of his birth. Again, when Nathaniel had called Him "Son of God," the evidence of his ignorance of Christ's birth was seen in the previous question he had asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"[9]

Other people might claim, he continues, that the term "Son of God" meant simply "Messiah" to the Jews. It was an official and not a personal appellation. This, likewise, is erroneous, he feels, on the ground that the Jews distinguished between the names. Evidence of this lies in the fact that to the Jew, for a person to profess to be the Son of God was for him to commit blasphemy; but to profess to be simply the Messiah was not so considered.[10] Watson's thinking is not clear on this point, however, as in another connexion he asserts that "Son of God" "marks the natural relation of Messiah to God; and the term 'Messiah,' his official relation to men," in the same manner that one might speak of David - the King of Israel, Son of Jesse.[11]

To those who object that the use of Sonship implies a beginning of existence, he affirms that one must stand upon the sure rock of the testimony of God.

> This being established, the incomprehensible and mysterious considerations, connected with the doctrine, must be left among those deep things of God which, in the present state at

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8 Watson, op. cit., pp. 221-222.
9 Ibid., p. 222.
10 Ibid., p. 223.
11 Ibid., p. 235.

> least, we are not able to search and fathom. For this reason, the attempts which have been made to indicate, though faintly, the manner of generation of the Son, are not to be commended.[12]

He thus evades once again the essential problem which Clarke confronted.

The objections being answered to his satisfaction, Watson approaches the problem of proving the eternal Sonship of Christ. From the Old Testament he calls forth four passages: Psalm 2:7; Proverbs 8:28; Micah 5:2; Proverbs 30:4.

In his discussion of Psalm 2:7 he again attacks the notion that Christ's Sonship was in any way determined by the miraculous nature of his birth. When the psalmist used the words, "This day have I begotten thee," he was referring not to the day of Christ's birth but to the day of his resurrection. Paul himself confirms this in Romans 1:3-4 when he points to the resurrection as the declaration of the Sonship.[13] This offers an illustration of Watson's often indiscriminate method of handling Scripture. He begins with a clause of Ps. 2:7, "This day have I begotten thee," which he arbitrarily interprets in relation to Paul's statement that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Having related the "day" of the begetting with that of the declaration, the resurrection, he draws this conclusion:

> Neither the miraculous conception of Christ, nor yet his resurrection from the dead, is,

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12 Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 265.
13 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

> therefore, the foundation of his being called the "Son of God" in this Psalm. Not the first, for there is no allusion to it nor the second for he was declared from heaven to be the "beloved Son" of the Father, at his very entrance upon his ministry, and consequently before the resurrection.[14]

His exegesis would have been far less confused if he had not tried to expound against the miraculous conception theory of Christ's Sonship and had been content with John Wesley's interpretation of the verse:

> I have begotten thee from eternity, which by its unalterable permanency of duration, is one continual, unsuccessive day.[15]

In Proverbs 8:22,

> The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old,

he explains that Solomon is referring to the personal Wisdom of God in the same relation as a Son to whom he ascribes divine attributes.[16] This bears evidence that the Jews were not completely ignorant of the relationship between the Father and Son in the Godhead and accounts for the idea of divinity which they connected with the name, "Son of God."[17] The irrelevance of this verse is obvious unless one identify the "Wisdom of God" with the "Son of God," as Watson suggests. To make such an identification, however, is to beg the question with those who believed with Clarke that there was no "Son of God" until Christ's birth.

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14 Watson, op. cit., p. 226.
15 John Wesley, Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament, on Hebrew 1:5.
16 Watson, op. cit., p. 230.
17 Ibid., p. 231.

Still in a line of opposition to the idea that Christ's birth established his Sonship, Watson finds another convincing verse in Proverbs 30:4, which "expresses as clearly as possible, that God has a Son, and makes no reference to the incarnation at all."[18]

> Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fist? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?

> But, thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting. Micah 5:2.

In this instance, Watson affirms, the person of whom the verse speaks is said to have had a twofold birth or "going forth."

> By a natural birth he came forth from Bethlehem of Judah; by another, and a higher, he was from the days of eternity. One is opposed to the other; but the last is carried into eternity itself by words which most clearly intimate an existence prior to the birth in Bethlehem, and that an eternal one.[19]

Here, he is again merely begging the question with one who would not deny that God was to send his eternal "Word" or agent into the world, but would deny that the relation of sonship existed previous to the time the "Word became flesh."

Of the four passages thus presented by Watson from the Old Testament in proof of the eternal Sonship of Christ, three of them are negatively directed toward the idea that Sonship was the result of Christ's birth; and the remaining one

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18 Watson, op. cit., p. 234.
19 Ibid., p. 232.

begs the question. One can hardly declare that he has established a positive foundation for the belief from the material. He was less cautious than another writer on the subject:

> It appears to me, that nothing can be gathered from the Old Testament, but what militates against the doctrine; and the few passages that have been brought forward by its advocates, furnish evidence in general to overthrow it.[20]

From the Gospels Watson brings forth five sections in proof of his case.[21] In a lengthy argument he maintains that God himself bore witness of the Sonship of Christ, as testified at His baptism[22] and later claimed by Jesus in John 5:37. As a Son He was invested with all the offices, power, and authority implied in the use of the term as a personal title rather than an official one. Watson further implies that the acceptation of the name of Son in a personal sense must lead to the acceptation of the fact that He had always been a Son.

> And it is affirmed, not that he is Son, and beloved as a Son, because of his being invested with these offices, but that he is invested with them because he was the well-beloved Son; a circumstance which fully demonstrates that "Son of God" is not an official title, and that it is not of the same import as Messiah.[23]

Attestation of this view he finds in the actions of the Jews who tried to kill Jesus because He said that "God was his Father, making himself equal with God."[24]

In another argument he refers again to the passages

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20 Stephen Brunskill, "Thoughts on the Divinity and Sonship of Jesus Christ," p. 13.
21 Watson, op. cit., p. 235ff.
22 Ibid., p. 236.
23 Ibid., p. 237.
24 John 5:18.

used in his refutation of Clarke, namely, those relating to the "only begotten" of God. Particularly, he exhibits John 1:14 as proving his point that the glory of Christ was more than a human glory.[25] Nowhere, better than in the discussion of this verse, is the futility of this entire controversy more discernible. The question at issue was not one of vital importance to the Christian faith. All parties believed in the full divinity of Jesus Christ but debated in circles the meaning of the word, "Son". To Watson's affirmation on this verse Exley replied:

> I grant the Word is called also the only begotten Son of God. But why is he so called? Most clearly because he was made flesh, the Divine Nature, in connexion with the Human, not exclusive of it, is called, Christ the Son of God.[26]

Clarke would agree with Watson that the glory of Christ is the glory of the "only begotten;" indeed, he would insist that it is the glory of the "Word made Flesh," which is what he maintained.

> That very person who was in the beginning - who was with God - and who was God, verse 1, in the fullness of time became flesh - became incarnated by power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin
> (and dwelt among us) And tabernacled among us; the human nature which he took of the Virgin, being as the shrine, house, or temple, in which his immaculate Deity condescended to dwell.[27]

The Word made flesh was the Son of God, according to Clarke. Wesley agrees, also, that "the Word made flesh" was the "only

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25 Watson, op. cit., p. 239.
26 Thomas Exley, "A Vindication of Dr. Adam Clarke, in Answer to Mr. Moore--" p. 12.
27 Adam Clarke, Commentary on the New Testament, on John 1:14.

begotten" of the Father; but he does not intimate whether he believes the "Word" to be a "Son" previous to the incarnation.

> The whole verse might be paraphrased thus: And in order to raise to this dignity and happiness, the eternal Word, by a most amazing condescension, was made flesh, united himself to our miserable nature, with all its innocent infirmities. And he did not make us a transient visit, but tabernacled among us on earth, displaying his glory in a more eminent manner than ever of old in the tabernacle of Moses. And we, who are now recording these things, beheld his glory with so strict an attention, that we can testify, it was in every respect such a glory as became the Only begotten of the Father.[28]

This verse was ill chosen by Watson as proof of the fact that "only begotten" refers to a status of Sonship prior to the incarnation.

Watson next affirms:

> All those passages, too, which declare that "all things were made by the Son," and that God "sent his Son" into the world, may be considered as declarations of a divine Sonship, because they imply that the creator was, at the very period of creation, a Son, and that he was the Son of God when, and consequently before, he was sent into the world.[29]

Unfortunately, he does not give the full references of the texts quoted. Apparently, in the first instance, he means John 1:3, "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." If this is true, he has mistakenly substituted "Son" for the pronoun, "him," which in its context refers not to the Son but to the Word; therefore, his point loses its force. Concerning those verses which refer to the

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28 Wesley, op. cit., on John 1:14.
29 Watson, op. cit., p. 241.

Son as being "sent from God," such as John 3:16; 3:17; 1 John 1:14, Watson interprets them to imply that the Son must have been with the Father before being sent. Those who disagree with Watson, however, might point out that John speaks of God's sending his "Only begotten Son,"[30] which term he has previously used in apposition to "the Word made flesh."[31] The comments of the preceding paragraph, in that case, are again applicable.

Watson produces two passages in which Christ calls God, Father, which he claims refer directly and wholly to His divine character. On both occasions when Jesus said, "I and my Father are one,"[32] and again, when he said, "My Father worketh, hitherto, and I work,"[33] the Jews tried to kill him because they understood him to be equating himself with God.[34] The remarks of Clarke on the former verse, however, indicate how one who believes otherwise might interpret it.

> It is worthy of remark that Christ does not say, "I and my Father," which my our translation very improperly supplies, and which in this place would have conveyed a widely different meaning: for then it would imply that the human nature of Christ, of which alone, I conceive, God is ever said to be the Father in the scripture, was equal to the Most High: but he says, speaking then as God over all, "I and the Father," the Creator of all things, the Judge of all men, the Father of the spirits of all flesh - "are one," one in nature, one in all attributes of Godhead, and one in all the operations of those attributes: and so it is evident that the Jews understood him.[35]

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30 John 3:16.
31 John 1:14.
32 John 10:30.
33 John 5:17.
34 Watson, op. cit., p. 243.
35 Adam Clarke, op. cit., on John 10:30.

Wesley also makes the correction referred to by Clarke.[36] To another writer the verse "neither determines the ground of paternal character in the one, nor the filial relation in the other."[37] Macgregor, writing more recently, affirms that "the unity here claimed is ethical rather than metaphysical, a unity of will rather than of essence and personality, a mystical unity implying two separate personalities."[38] Concerning the second verse, Jesus said, "My Father"; but did he not also teach his followers to pray, "Our Father"?

To the above examples in which Watson claims Christ to have called God His Father solely in reference to His divine nature, he adds a final one. When Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin immediately preceding His crucifixion, they put the question to Him:

> Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.[39]

Jesus' answer actually means, according to Watson, "I am that ye say."[40] Thus, Jesus was here claiming a personal rather than an official relation to God; and the Sanhedrin understood it to be such.

> In confessing himself to be, in that sense, the Son of God, he did more than claim to be the Messiah; for the council judged him, for that reason, guilty of blasphemy; a charge which could not lie against anyone, by the Jewish law, for professing to be the Messiah.[41]

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36 Wesley, op. cit., on John 10:30.

37 William Dalgleish, The True Sonship of Christ Investigated and His Person, Dignity and Office Explained and Confirmed from the Sacred Scriptures, p. 37-38.

38 G. H. C. Macgregor, The Gospel of John, p. 241.

39 Luke 22:70.

40 Watson, op. cit., p. 245. 41 Loc. cit.

If one agrees with the Sanhedrin that Jesus posits his divine Sonship, Watson concludes that one must also agree that if the relationship is perfect in its divinity, it must be eternal as well.

Watson turns his attention from the gospels to the Epistles to the Romans and Hebrews where he finds four further significant proofs of the eternal Sonship: Romans 1:3,4; 8:3; Hebrews 1 ; 3:5,6. His views on Romans1:3,4 have been previously noted.

> For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Romans 8:3.

He argues forcefully that Paul obviously intimates that Christ was the "Son" before he was sent; and that flesh was the nature assumed by the "Son," but not the only nature in which he was the "Son."[42]

Fairbairn has said of the Sonship that it is the "determinate idea" of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "the pivot on which the argument everywhere turns."[43] Watson finds the whole argument of the first chapter designed to prove Christ to be superior to the angels.[44] Concerning Christ as the "brightness" of God,[45] he says,

> Certainly this brightness, or effulgence from the Father, is expressly spoken of the Son; but it cannot be affirmed of him with reference to his humanity; and, if it must necessarily be

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42 Watson, op. cit., p. 251.
43 A. M. Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, pp. 324-325.
44 Watson, op. cit., p. 248.
45 Hebrews 1:3.

> understood of his superior, his divine nature, it necessarily implies the idea which is suggested by Sonship.[46]

He might have quoted Wesley's note on verse five and, thereby, appropriated the weight of the opinion of the founder of Methodism to his position.

> "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son" - I will own myself to be his Father, and him to be my Son, by eminent tokens of my peculiar love. The former clause relates to his natural Sonship, by an eternal, inconceivable generation; the other, to his Father's acknowledgement and treatment of him as his incarnate Son.[47]

He might also have referred to verse two which directly states that it was the Son by whom God made the worlds. He chooses, however, to build his argument on the grounds that the Son is placed in a position even above the angels; and therefore, his Sonship must apply to his divine nature. In the same line of argument he appeals to Hebrews 3:5,6 to prove that Christ was the Son in a sense higher than human and higher than Moses.[48]

After having thus demonstrated his position by the witness of the Scripture, he closes the case with an appeal to reason. The first Person of the Trinity is called the Father of Christ. Since the Holy Spirit is accredited with having produced the human nature of Christ in the womb of Mary, the use of the word "Father" as applied to the first Person of the Trinity must be in reference to His having produced the divine nature of Christ.[49] Furthermore, if the term, "Son of God," is

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46 Watson, op. cit., p. 249.
47 Wesley, op. cit., on Hebrews 1:5 (on Psalm 2:7).
48 Watson, op. cit., p. 251.
49 Ibid., p. 252.

founded on the incarnation, it can have only three possible meanings: 1. the nature in which He was incarnated - Manhood; 2. the act of incarnation, of assuming our nature; 3. the nature which incarnated itself - Godhead. That Christ was the Son simply because of His human nature and birth, he feels to be sufficiently refuted. The second choice he rejects as being without scriptural support. That Christ is the Son and has eternally been the Son, by virtue of his place in the Godhead, thus remains and must be the true answer.[50]

Did Watson establish his position? The question will be treated in the conclusion to the chapter.

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50 Watson, op. cit., p. 254.

C. Evaluation.

The controversy surrounding the eternal Sonship of Christ was not new when Watson and Clarke entered the field. In the century preceding them the doctrine had been defended by David Williamson[1] and Robert Walker[2] and questioned by so notable a figure as Isaac Watts[3] and by William Dalgleish.[4] The fundamental principle never questioned by the above named writers, nor by Watson and Clarke, is the same. That principle must be examined, however, in order to evaluate Watson's position.

The assumption underlying all of Watson's thought, as well as that of his brethren whom he opposed, concerning the person of Christ is that Christ is to be understood only in the traditional terms of two natures, human and divine, which are united in Him, but which are not to be confused.

> In him there is no confusion of the two natures,. . .His Godhead was not deteriorated by

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1 David Williamson, "The Doctrine of the Churches of England and Scotland, &c., with Respect to the Eternal Sonship of Christ, and the Procession of the Holy Ghost, Shewn to be Clearly Founded on Scripture."

2 Robert Walker, "A Defence of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ, As revealed in the Scriptures; In Opposition to a Late Scheme of Temporal Sonship."

3 Isaac Watts, Useful and Important Questions Concerning the Son of God Freely Proposed to which is Added "A Charitable Essay".

4 William Dalgleish, The True Sonship of Christ Investigated and His Person, Dignity and Office Explained and Confirmed from the Sacred Scriptures.

> uniting itself with a human body, for "he is the true God;" his humanity was not, whilst on earth, exalted into properties which made it different in kind from the humanity of his creatures.[5]

Not only are the opposite natures not to be confused but also neither is to be considered in any way imperfect or impaired by its union with the other.

> If the divine nature in him had been imperfect, it would have lost its essential character, for it is essential to Deity to be perfect and complete; if any of the essential properties of human nature had been wanting, he would not have been man; if, as some of the preceding notions implied, divine and human had been mixed and confounded in him, he would have been a compounded being, neither God nor man.[6]

Since this differentiation is a matter of fact to Watson, he maintains that the understanding of the Scripture is dependent upon the constant remembrance of it.

> This distinction is expressed in modern theological language, by considering some things which are spoken of Christ, as said of his divine, others of his human, nature; and he who takes this principle of interpretation along with him, will seldom find any difficulty in apprehending the sense of the sacred writers, though the subjects themselves be often, to human minds, inscrutable.[7]

In this respect, as in many others, Watson asserts the orthodoxy of his views by comparing them with the opinions of the Church and church fathers. He points out that the second article of the Church of England reads as follows:

> The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the

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5 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. X, p. 345.
6 Ibid., p. 346.
7 Loc. cit.

> very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin of her substance; so that the two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and the manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man.[8]

Likewise, he finds in the statement of the Council of Chalcedon a further attestation of the validity of his position.[9] He might also have referred to the founders of Methodism; for Charles Wesley sang:

> Very man, and very God,
> Thou hast bought us with Thy blood:
> Two distinguished natures we
> In Thy single person see,
> God and man in Thee alone
> Mix inseparably One.[10]

Both Watson and Clarke founded their variant doctrines upon this distinction. Clarke asserted that either Christ was the Son of God as to His human nature, or His divine nature was made inferior and imperfect by the implications of Sonship. Watson as strongly affirmed that Christ was the Son of God as to His divine nature and was, therefore, His Son from all eternity because the Scriptures declare it to be so. An important question at which he hinted, but which he failed to develop, was that of the relations between the persons of the Trinity if Christ "became" a Son. That both of them expressed the commonly accepted concept in making the distinction is acknowledged. That such a rigid bisection of the nature of Christ is valid,

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8 Watson, on. cit., p. 345.
9 Ibid., p. 344.
10 J. E. Rattenbury, The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns, p. 144.

however, is questionable.

The scope and purpose of this study does not warrent an exhaustive examination of this issue in the early Christological controversies. In the light of both Watson's and Clarke's positions, however, one may readily agree with H. R. Mackintosh's statement concerning the dangers accompanying the duality of the two natures concept of Christ. "In spite of all attempts to find safe middle waters, it has always led to choose between being tossed on the Scylla of a duplex personality and the Charybdis of a denial of Christ's real manhood."[11] Clarke's theory that the sonship of Christ is the result of the Logos being made flesh is essentially that of Marcellus of Ancyra. When carried to its logical conclusion it leads to either Sabellianism or Adoptionism, depending on whether the main emphasis is placed on the Logos or the Son. Watson's attempt to protect the divinity of Christ leads him into an undisguised statement of Docetism. The divine nature of Christ bears a filial relationship to the first person of the Trinity. The other nature of Jesus, rather than being a truly human nature, is the supernatural creation of the third person of the Trinity. There is, therefore, no perfectly human nature in Christ. It must be admitted that neither Watson nor Clarke would have followed their arguments to such conclusions, but that does not alter the fact that their positions logically inclined toward the conclusions.

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11 John Baillie, The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity, p. 131. Quoting H. R. Mackintosh.

Can the duality of natures be properly maintained? The assumption underlying it is that the nature of God and the nature of man are separated by differences too vast to reconcile. Professor John Baillie expresses the doubt that this need necessarily be true.

> God's nature and man's nature, we believe, are not different in kind, because in kind they are both spiritual nature, and ethical nature. . . God's nature is, in the wholeness of eternal and infinite perfection, that to which our human nature gropingly and blunderingly, and ever imperfectly, strives to attain. God's nature is love, and man's nature is trying to be love. Indeed that, for us, is the very meaning of the Incarnation. . .The Christian announcement is, quite centrally and essentially, that God was made manifest to us in a Man - in a soul of like passions with our own but controlled to finer ends, in a life of simple faith and quiet helpfulness lived out under conditions in its own little niche of time and place, and in a cruel death bravely borne.[12]

God's nature is, in essence, the perfection of that toward which human nature must strive, but they are not different kinds of nature. "The Word became flesh." He took the form of a man, but He took no new nature with that form. Rather, He was God's demonstration to man of the creature which man, by his nature, is intended to be. Christ's life declared, once and for all, that the fulfillment of man's nature is the expression of God's. God is love; Christ is love incarnate; love is the fulfillment of man's destiny. Christ is also the revelation to man of the nature of God, which is to say the same thing. Fairbairn speaks of Christ in relation to the Incarnation as an "historical Person so placed that he realizes the affinities of God and man,

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12 Baillie, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

and so constituted that he brings them into organic relations."[13] Christ realized the "affinities of God and man," and those affinities are of nature. Christ is, to use another expression of Fairbairn, the "communication" from God to man of the truth concerning the natures both of God and man.

How then can Clarke speak of Christ as the Son of God by His human nature, and Watson speak of Him as Son by His divine nature? "He was not a person who became a son, or was destined to be a son, but his whole personality was absolute sonship."[14] Christ is the Son of God by virtue of His unique being as the full, perfect nature of God in human form, not tainted as is man, by sin. Sonship, in this sense, is a state of complete expression of God's nature; and it is into this state that Paul invites men to be adopted. That is not to say that Christ was adopted, for He always was and is the Son of God; but because he lived as a Son, man may now know both the nature of God and the meaning and end of human life, namely, to become sons of God. It is a mistake, therefore, to differentiate between a divine and a human nature, much less, to found the relationship of Christ to God upon such a distortion.

Did Watson, upon his own ground, present a convincing case for the eternal Sonship of Christ? In his controversy with Clarke his main effort was to prove that Christ was a Son in a divine sense. In the Theological Institutes he developed the same thesis with renewed vigor, his conclusion being that if

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13 A. M. Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 471.

14 P. T. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 285.

Christ is divinely a Son, He must be eternal since divinity is perfect and, therefore, eternal. At least two of his points contribute positively to his cause: the fact that the Jews so interpreted Jesus' words and claims as to warrant the charge of blasphemy; the appeal to Hebrews which definitely attributes to the Son a status higher than man. Those who agreed with his premises doubtless found his arguments convincing. Clarke and his followers, however, could have complained that he never confronted or offered a solution to their problem of the apparent contradiction between divinity and Sonship. Watson did not try to explain it. In keeping with his ideas of the use of reason, no contradiction to the mind could be allowed to stand in the way of accepting a doctrine which was declared by Scripture. Actually there was no answer as long as both men attributed dual natures to Christ.

CHAPTER 4

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

A. Importance of and Statement of the Doctrine.

In the course of his Theological Institutes Watson expounded the Wesleyan Methodist interpretation of the belief that the Spirit of God witnesses with the spirit of man that he is a child of God. At times he referred to the doctrine as "the witness of the Spirit," at times as "assurance." By either name, the belief occupied a central place in his thought relating to the interplay between God and man in the salvation of the human soul. When the Methodist interpretation of the doctrine was attacked, Watson defended and elaborated it in the pages of the Methodist Magazine. To this important phase of his thought attention must now be turned. It is the purpose of this chapter: 1. to present his statement of the belief; 2. to examine his defense of the doctrine; 3. to examine the texts upon which he based his interpretation; 4. to view the doctrine in the light of other theological writers; 5. to examine the doctrine in the light of religious experience.

A. Importance of and statement of the Doctrine.

James Denney coined this apothegm about the doctrine of assurance:

> Nothing is more characteristic of Churches than their attitude to assurance, and the place

> they give it in their preaching and their systems of doctrine. Speaking broadly, we may say that in the Romish Church it is regarded as essentially akin to presumption; in the Protestant Churches it is a privilege or a duty; but in the New Testament religion it is simply a fact.[1]

In the thought and lives of John Wesley and the early Methodists the doctrine was regarded as both a privilege and a fact. Prior to Wesley's "heart warming" experience, while he was still a missionary struggling in Savannah, Georgia, he was confronted with the belief; and it proved to be somewhat disquieting to him. On Sunday, February 8, 1736, he recorded this conversation in his Journal:

> I asked Mr. Spangenberg's advice with regard to myself - to my conduct. He told me he could say nothing till he had asked me two or three questions. 'Do you know yourself? Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?' I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?' I paused, and said, 'I know he is the Savior of the World.' 'True,' he replied; 'but do you know he has saved you?' I answered, 'I hope he has died to save me.' He only added, 'Do you know yourself?' I said, 'I do.' But I fear they were vain words.[2]

Two years later Wesley's experience of faith removed all hesitancy so that he could record for May 24, 1738:

> I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.[3]

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1 Bernhard Citron, New Birth, p. 179. Quoted from The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, Mackintosh.
2 John Wesley, Journal, Vol. 1, p. 151.
3 Ibid., p. 476.

Thus, for Wesley himself the assurance that his sins were forgiven became a fact, one which he later declared to be the "common privilege of Christians, fearing God, and working righteousness."[4] Assurance, or the witness of the spirit, thereupon, assumes a role of cardinal significance in the theology of Wesley; for it is the means by which "a man's justification is made manifest, the internal sign that the power of God has touched his life, that his sins have been forgiven, and that he has been set on the road to holiness and final salvation."[5]

Charles Wesley, as well as John, found in the experience of his own soul's relation to God the same witness and assurance, the expression of which in his hymns tends to "break through language and escape."[6] In speaking of the intercession of Christ before God for man he affirms:

> The Father hears him pray,
> His dear Anointed One;
> He cannot turn away
> The presence of His Son;
> His spirit answers to the blood,
> And tells me I am born of God.
>
> My God is reconciled,
> His pardoning voice I hear;
> He owns me for his child,
> I can no longer fear:
> With confidence I now draw nigh,
> And Father, Abba, Father! cry.[7]

The early Methodists were, therefore, steeped in the doctrine. They heard it preached by their founder; they sang it in their

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4 Robert Southey, The Life of John Wesley, p. 243.
5 W. R. Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, p. 215.
6 J. E. Rattenbury, The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns, p. 258. Phrase quoted from Robert Browning.
7 The Methodist Hymn Book With Tunes, p. 368.

hymns; what was more important, they discovered it to be gloriously true in their own lives.

Not everyone was as convinced of the experience as were the Wesleys and the Methodists, however; and their assertions were received by most people as a sign of "enthusiasm," a condition as devoutly to be shunned as sin, according to the accepted pattern of life in eighteenth century England. In a conversation with Wesley, Joseph Butler is reported to have accused such pretence of gifts from the Spirit as being "a horrid thing, a very horrid thing."[8] In Watson's day the attitude of antagonism toward the experience was far from dead; for Wesley's assertion of it as distinguished from presumption, Southey judged to be the answer of "every one who has been crazed by enthusiasm."[9] Opposition to the doctrine was sufficiently great that Watson deemed the holding aloft the light of its truth to be a special charge to the Methodists of his day:

> and though we must expect the stigma of enthusiasm, not only from many who are "without," but from others also, it is a part of our calling, as a religious community, still to bear the testimony, through evil report and good report.[10]

Watson recognized the importance of the experience in man's deep interest in knowing not only that sins may be forgiven and that men may become members of the family of God, but also, what is of greater significance to the individual soul,

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8 Howard Watkin-Jones, The Holy Spirit from Arminius to Wesley, p. 313.

9 Southey, op. cit., p. 242.

10 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 248.

that his particular sins are forgiven and that he has been accepted into that family.[11] Without such witness there can be no certainty of one's being at present in a state of salvation. Without the witness the condition of the good men in the Old Testament was superior to that of those in the New Testament, in Watson's opinion; for even David knew the joys of salvation.[12]

The witness of the Spirit is inextricably bound in Watson's thought to the entire process of salvation, the process whereby a sinner is convicted of his sin, makes repentance to God, is forgiven by God's grace, is adopted into God's family, is assured by the witness of the Spirit of God with his own spirit that he has received such favor in God's sight, is regenerated, and lives a new life of holiness and love. Only upon the condition of repentance can a man be justified; for "justification is that act of God whereby he remits all past sin, receiving the sinner into his favor, and treating him as a just or righteous man."[13] "The pardon and remission of sins," "the nonimputation of sin," and "the imputation of righteousness" are all terms of the same import.[14] By justification one is said to be in Christ, that is, one becomes a personal partaker of the benefits of his death,[15] and is thereby adopted into the family of God. Adoption, therefore, is the act whereby one who was alienated and disinherited is made a son of God and an

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11 Watson, Works, Vol. IV, p. 289.
12 Ibid., pp. 296-97.
13 Watson, Works, Vol. II, p. 456.
14 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 173.
15 Watson, Works, Vol. VI, p. 259.

heir of his eternal glory.[16] To one in the adopted state belong freedom from a servile spirit, filial confidence in God, free access to Him at all times and under any circumstance, and the Spirit of adoption, which is to say, the witness of the Holy Spirit to his adoption. Only upon the confirmation of the Spirit can one know of his adoption and entrance into those privileges of the children of God.[17] The granting of the inward witness of the Spirit is, therefore, a necessary stage in the process of salvation. Watson defines it as:

> The inward witness or testimony of the Holy Spirit to the adoption or sonship of believers, from which flows a comfortable persuasion or conviction of our present acceptance with God, and the hope of our future and eternal glory.[18]

The words "present acceptance" are significant for his thought inasmuch as the assurance imbued by the inward witness is in no wise to be understood as insurance against the believer's relinquishing his status in God's family. Watson himself prefers that the word "assurance" be replaced by his phrase, "a comfortable persuasion, or conviction, of our justification and adoption," although the expressions of Paul, "the full assurance of faith " and "the full assurance of hope," might warrant the former; for by his definition, the doctrine of the inward witness is not to be confused with the doctrine of assurance as maintained by the followers of Calvin.[19] Another reason for caution in the use of the term "assurance," is that it tends to imply the absence of all doubt in the experience of

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16 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 252.
17 Loc. cit.
18 Ibid., p. 253.
19 Ibid., p. 254.

Christians; whereas, experience itself confirms that "as our faith may not at first, or at all times, be equally strong, the testimony of the spirit may have its degrees of strength, and our persuasion or conviction be proportionately regulated."[20]

The basis of Watson's interpretation is found in two passages:

> For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God. Romans 8:15-16.
>
> But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Galatians 4:4-6.

That these verses lead one to anticipate some sort of witness to his adoption, should that adoption take place, is acknowledged. When theologians have tried to interpret the nature of that witness, however, agreement has ended. Watson affirms that there were four main explanations of the passages, four delineations of the nature of the witness in his day.

1. The first explanation he offers is his own, the Wesleyan Methodist. The clause, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit," indicates that the witness to be expected is twofold, the witness of the Spirit of God and of one's own spirit.[21] The former bears a direct testimony and is, in Wesley's words, an "inward impression on the soul, whereby the

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20 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 254.
21 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 255 and Vol. IV, p. 292.

Spirit of God witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Christ hath loved me; that I, even I, am reconciled to God."[22] This testimony is not to be misconstrued, as by some, to mean an awakened sense of one's fallen condition, or true repentance, or even an awareness of a changed moral condition, whereby a person reaches the conclusion that he has become a child of God. Rather, it witnesses simply and directly that one has been adopted by God,[23] and leaves no conclusions to be drawn. The second testimony is that of one's own spirit witnessing indirectly, not to the fact of one's adoption, but to the truth that he has received the Spirit of adoption, that he is under no delusive impression concerning the direct witness.[24] In answer to the question, "How am I assured that I do not mistake the voice of the Spirit?" he again quotes Wesley, "By the answer of a good conscience toward God: Hereby you shall know that you are in no delusion, that you have not deceived your soul."[25] To describe the manner in which the testimony is communicated would be difficult, Watson confesses; and, indeed, it is not necessary. Whether it be called an impression or any other name, it amounts to a witness by which all doubt is put away and a fact ascertained.[26] It is followed immediately by the "fruit of the Spirit," namely, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness.[27] Watson would further agree with Wesley that "it is inevitably

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22 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 255.
23 Watson, Works, Vol. IV, pp. 292-93.
24 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 291.
25 Ibid., p. 255.
26 Watson, Works, Vol. IV, p. 294.
27 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 256.

destroyed, not only by the commission of any outward sin, or the ommission of known duty, but by giving way to any inward sin; in a word, by whatever grieves the Holy Spirit of God."[28]

2. The second opinion likewise acknowledges a twofold witness. The "witness of the Spirit" is not direct, in this instance, but consists of the moral effects produced in one who believes, and is in reality merely the "fruit of the Spirit." The witness of one's own spirit is designated as the consciousness of one's faith. Advocates of the opinion recognize it as the reflex act of faith by which a person who is conscious of believing reasons in this manner, "I know that I believe in Christ, therefore I know that I shall obtain everlasting life."[29]

3. The third interpretation, maintained by Bishop Bull is attributed by Watson to a "great part" of the evangelical clergy of his day.[30] There is but one witness, that of the Holy Spirit acting concurrently with man's spirit. Advocates of this idea reason in the following manner, says Watson:

> Since God has said in his word, that those persons are his children in whom certain characteristics are found, we must examine ourselves, to see whether these marks are found in us; and, if we find them, we may conclude that our sins are forgiven, and that we are the children of God; and thus, in this safe and rational way, we may infer our adoption into the divine family.[31]

4. A fourth interpretation is that there is a direct witness such as Watson elaborates, but it is reserved as the

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28 John Wesley, The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, Vol. V, p. 124.
29 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 256.
30 Ibid., p. 257.
31 Watson, Works, Vol. IV, p. 299.

special privilege of a few favored persons.[32]

In opposition to the erroneous opinions, Watson reasons that some "comfortable persuasion" or, at least, a hope of divine favor is attainable and is actually possessed by many Christians; for if the act of justification takes place at all, it must be made known. The general promise of God's love and forgiveness is insufficient to convey such personal information; besides, Scripture definitely declares a twofold witness consisting of the Holy Spirit with our own spirits. Bull's interpretation must be in error since he delegates to the Holy Spirit a testimony which is mediated through the mind and spirit of man, and thus constitutes only one witness. Furthermore, if the Holy Spirit only aids the mind to discern the extent of his work in man, how far must that aid progress before one can be sure of his adoption?[33] It is true that the Holy Spirit works repentance and faith in man; but repentance and faith, of themselves, cannot instigate the "comfortable persuasion of a man's adoption." "What," one might ask, "if the fruits of the Spirit appear in a man's life? Is that not sufficient evidence of adoption without a more direct witness?" Whereas such fruits do not result from anything but manifest pardon, they themselves cannot manifest that pardon. They can only exist after the pardon is granted.

> If we "love God," it is because we know him as God reconciled; if we have "joy in God," it is because we have received the reconciliation; if we have peace, it is because, "being justi-

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32 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 257.
33 Ibid., p. 262.

> fied by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." God conceived of as angry cannot be the object of filial love.[34]

Watson, therefore, concludes that there is a twofold witness and that the witness of the Holy Spirit is not mediated but is given directly to man. In order to dispel any notion that the doctrine is new or enthusiastic, he quotes extensively from such Church figures as Bishop Hooper, Bishop Andrews, Bishop Pearson, and Richard Hooker.

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34 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 265.

B. Defense of the Doctrine.

Since Watson believed so emphatically in his interpretation of the witness of the Spirit as a necessary phase in the plan of salvation, it was inevitable that opportunities to explain and defend his views would present themselves. The first such opportunity, chronologically speaking, was the occasion of the publication of Southey's Life of Wesley; but his defense in that instance will be reserved until last in this section. A larger field for his pen was afforded by the repercussions of a review which he wrote for the Methodist Magazine.

Upon the publication of a book of sermons by Rev. J. W. Cunningham, then Vicar of Harrow, Watson contributed to the Methodist Magazine a review of the work. Cunningham had said, in speaking of the witness of the Spirit, "It is not a mere unaccountable persuasion of our eternal safety, without any of the fruits of the Spirit in our life to warrant this persuasion."[1] Although Watson agrees in part with this statement, he finds sufficient cause to doubt that the author fully understands the significance of the doctrine with which he deals, or even that his views on the doctrine are correct. In the first place, the witness of the Spirit in no way implies a "persuasion of our eternal safety." Watson jealously guards the doctrine from any intimation which might remove responsibility from the individual

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 241, Review XLI, quoting Cunningham.

for the future. Assurance is given to a person not in regard to the future but for the present moment. Whether or not the confidence will be maintained depends upon one's life and faith from moment to moment. This is his affirmation in his sermons as well.

> Some persons confound this assurance of present acceptance with an assurance of final salvation. . .We are called to live in the comfortable assurance of the divine favour, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; but this conveys to us no certain assurance of final salvation. We are still to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same things. The faith which brings us into this state must maintain us in it. We must still watch and pray; still lay aside every weight, and easily besetting sin; still fight the good fight of faith, ever feeling that only to those who are faithful unto death shall the crown of life be given.[2]

Watson objects to Cunningham's implication that the inner persuasion can continue unconnected with the fruits of the Spirit.[3] This is the heart of Cunningham's fallacy and indicative of his mistake in understanding the doctrine; for he makes the proof of pardon depend exclusively upon the production of the fruits of the spirit in an individual. Watson agrees that the fruits in a life are connected with the witness of the Spirit, but in a way far more vital than Cunningham realizes. There are no real fruits of the Spirit where the direct inward witness has not been previously granted. They are not only connected to it but dependent upon it, cannot exist without it.

> All reason lies against it; for how can God be loved with a filial love, unless he is known

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2 Watson, Works, Vol. IV, p. 303.
3 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 241, Review XLI.

> as a Father? and how can there be peace, peace in the conscience, where there is no knowledge of a previous reconciliation?[4]

Seen in correct perspective, the fruits of the Spirit cannot be regarded as the ground upon which one may conclude that he is a son of God; for such a view endangers the proper acceptance of justification by faith. God sends the Spirit of adoption into men's hearts crying, "Abba, Father," because they are already sons, and in order that they may know that they are so. Cunningham implies that the Spirit is sent into men's hearts to make them holy, and that upon the ground of the holiness they are to infer that they are sons. Watson affirms:

> Here is surely no witness of the Spirit in any proper sense; and this view, in point of fact, if closely pressed would subvert the doctrine of justification by faith alone, by making our sonship to depend upon our holiness, and not our holiness, our proper, evangelical holiness, to flow immediately from our sonship.[5]

Furthermore, how does the serious penitent fare under Cunningham's view? He is possessed by doubts and fears. He tries to live a good life, but he must continually wonder if the fruits evident in his life are sufficient to warrant his conclusion that he is a son. His minister might say to him, "The Lord is with you though you know it not." To speak, thus, is not only to deceive the man but also to speak without authority, yea, positively against it;[6] for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God."[7] "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we

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4 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 244.
5 Ibid., pp. 245-46.
6 Ibid., p. 246.
7 Romans 5:1.

have now received the atonement."[8] The true penitent need not be left in a state of uncertainty. He can and will know of his adoption by a direct witness of the Holy Spirit.

After Watson's review reached the public he received two letters questioning his views. He replied to each of the correspondents in following issues of the Methodist Magazine. In his review he had quoted Wesley as saying, "we must love God before we can be holy, love being the root of all holiness."[9] The first correspondent, Euphronius, insisted that a knowledge of God's love for man is of itself sufficient to produce in man the corresponding love which characterizes a person who has been justified by God.[10] The question, therefore, is whether love of God springs from a response to God's general love to man or from a persuasion of his love to an individual. Although Watson had dealt with the matter previously, he attempts to state it in a different and clearer manner for Euphronius. Men, he says, may be divided into four classes.[11] Firstly, there are those who are careless and carnal; they know of God's love but show no indication of a desire to love him in return. Secondly, some know of God's love, but for a reason they believe themselves to be beyond it; and, therefore, they go through life hopeless, despairing. Thirdly, others know of God's general love to man, and in that love is their hope; but do they, can they, by that hope, love God in return?

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8 Romans 5:11.
9 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, pp. 254-55.
10 Ibid., p. 256.
11 Ibid., pp. 253-254.

> This is impossible; for these, seeking though hoping, penitents do not regard God as their Father, in that special sense in which the word is correlative to "children" and "heirs;" they do not regard him as their God in that covenant which says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." This is what they seek, but have not found; and they cannot love God under relations in which they know and painfully feel that he does not yet stand to them. They know his general love to man, but not his pardoning love to them.[12]

Fourthly, there are those, the justified by faith, who know God's love and love him in return as children. Their love rests upon their persuasion of their personal interest in his pardoning and adopting mercy to them; and, where these benefits are not personally enjoyed, proper love to God cannot exist. Since one is not certain that God's forgiving, adopting love has been applied to him personally until the Holy Spirit bears a direct testimony of the fact, there is no proper love of God until that witness is given. For the same reason there can be no real holiness preceding the witness of the spirit.[13]

Watson's second correspondent, an evangelical clergyman who signed himself, Clericus, addressed to him a number of questions, of which the answers to three serve to further define Watson's view. Clericus first asked how one may distinguish the direct testimony from an imagination of the heart.[14] Watson replies by appealing to experience. There are many who claim a direct witness whose lives are such that the accusation of their

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12 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, pp. 253-54.
13 Ibid., p. 256.
14 Ibid., p. 262.

being under a delusion can not be brought against them. That there are cases in which imagination has played a part, he does not deny; but he does deny that there are many such examples or that they are the norm.[15] There is a sure method of deciding, however, which Wesley himself affirmed. The granting of the testimony of the Spirit of adoption must always be followed by the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace. The consciousness of the presence of these fruits is given to man as the witness of his own spirit, an indirect witness, to the truth of the direct witness borne to him by the Spirit. No man need wonder. If the Spirit has spoken to him, his life will show it.[16] Thus, the indirect witness of the human spirit confirms and checks the direct testimony of the Spirit of God. To the obvious question, "Why not, then, trust the evidence of the fruits without requiring a direct witness?" Watson's answer has been examined. Clericus pursued Watson by asking him if he could produce Scripture "requiring" the assurance of the forgiveness of sin. Watson retorts by requesting him, as he did Clarke, to prove the validity of infant baptism or the observance of the first day of the week as the Sabbath by texts. The persuasion of our acceptance by God is one of promise rather than command.[17] It is an integral part of God's method of saving man.

> Thus we see that it is indispensable, not per se, but as it is inseparably connected with the faith whereof cometh salvation, and which God commanded all men everywhere to exercise, as explicitly as he commandeth

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15 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 262.
16 Ibid., p. 263.
17 Ibid., p. 265.

them to repent.[18]

Clericus then inquired, "What of faith and repentance? You say that holiness is completely dependent upon and follows the direct witness. Faith and repentance must precede justification, however; are they not fruits of the Spirit?"[19] Watson points out that Clericus is failing to distinguish between fruits of the Spirit of bondage, and those of the Spirit of adoption.[20]

> The penitent in the seventh chapter of Romans felt the convincing and "killing" power of the law only by the Spirit. . .and, because he had not the power to do that he would, cried out under a sense of both guilt and bondage, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" These were fruits of the Spirit; but it would be very remarkable should anyone argue that they are such fruits as prove him pardoned and regenerate. . . Clericus must know that there are fruits of the Spirit as the Spirit of conviction; and fruits of the Spirit, as the Spirit of adoption.[21]

The correspondence between the men did not end with their first letters, but only one further matter of importance was raised. In a second communication Clericus questioned the wisdom of giving the doctrine so prominent a place in the ministry as did the Methodists, on the ground that it "tends to make many sad whom God hath not made sad, and, on the contrary, also to produce 'stony ground hearers,' of whom a hasty, unfounded joy is pointed out by our Lord as a leading characteristic."[22] Rather than produce undue sadness, Watson assures him:

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18 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 266.
19 Ibid., p. 267.
20 Watson, Works, Vol. IV, p. 290.
21 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 267.
22 Ibid., p. 273.

> The only evangelical mode of affording solid comfort to the sadness of the truly penitent, is to rest that comfort, not upon moral feelings and changes, which either cannot prove their reconciliation or which, per se, prove just the contrary, but upon the promise that God will send "the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father."[23]

With regard to the charge of making "stony-ground hearers," Watson knows of no example that such is true. Whatever the consequences, however, the doctrine is in the Scripture and must be preached in conjunction with all other truths which constitute the "word" spoken of in the parable.[24]

When Southey wrote his biography of John Wesley, he particularly charged Wesley with enthusiasm on the basis of his doctrines of human corruption and of assurance. These charges afforded Watson an opportunity, when he wrote his defense of Wesley, of expressing his own conviction as to the presuppositions which underlie the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit. That he considered these thoughts to be important is evidenced by the fact that he repeated them in his Life of Wesley[25] and in a sermon.[26] He reasons as follows: If 1. man is by nature prone to evil, a violator of the law, and liable to punishment; 2. grace and pardon are promised on condition of repentance and faith; 3. repentance leads to contrition of heart, grief of mind, and supplication for pardon; then 1. forgiveness is to be expected only after death, and a troubled mind can hope only for a favorable final decision; 2. forgiveness is granted as often as repentance and trust are exercised but is not known,

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23 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 274. 24 Loc. cit.
25 Watson, Works, Vol. V, p. 176.
26 Watson, Works, Vol. IV, p. 287.

and, therefore, the troubled mind remains; 3. forgiveness is followed by assurance, peace, and satisfaction of mind in the place of anxiety and fear.[27] The last is for Watson the Scriptural view. As for its being enthusiastic, the charge itself is evidence of the charger's ignorance of the doctrine. The doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, of assurance, is as opposed to license and real enthusiasm as it is to pride and self-sufficiency.[28]

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27 Watson, Works, Vol. V, p. 393.
28 Ibid., pp. 183-84.

C. Examination of Watson's Texts.

The textual burden of the validity of Watson's doctrine is rested by himself on two passages of Scripture, both of which are found in Paul's writings: Romans 8:14-16 and Galatians 4:4-6. Of these two, on the former alone depends the truth of his theory that there is a definite twofold witness: 1. the direct witness of the Spirit of God, 2. certified by the indirect witness of one's own spirit attesting to the production of fruits of the Spirit resulting from the changed relationship from that of a slave in bondage to that of a son of God. It is acknowledged that this is a heavy load to place upon a single short passage, or even two, particularly since Watson grounds all holiness of life in his doctrine. If Watson's interpretation is correct, a great truth and hope is held out to the aspiring sinner; if he has misinterpreted the verses, his soteriology is defective in a major respect. It is, therefore, the purpose of this section to examine the texts in an effort to determine the validity of Watson's conclusions.

Romans 8:14-16.

> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

As opposed to the translation given the verses by the King James version of the Bible above, the Revised Standard version renders

them as follows:

> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of Sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

A difference is immediately discernible in interpretation as well as translation between these quotations. It is one thing to say, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit," but quite another to say, "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit." Watson would object strenuously to the latter rendering on the ground that it places the recognition of God as Father prior to the assurance that one has been adopted. This, he would say, is impossible since one can make a filial cry to God only after his justification and the certainty that God's wrath and anger have been assuaged. The cry to the Father depends upon a relation of sonship and cannot be made until a person is conscious of that relationship. This constitutes a fine distinction but one which is, nevertheless, significant for Watson's theology. Although he and John Calvin represent different schools of thought in other respects, there is an interesting agreement between them on this point. After acknowledging that one's own mind of itself, without preceding testimony of the Spirit, could not convey assurance, Calvin asserts that "when the Spirit testifies to us, that we are the children of God, he at the same time pours into our hearts such confidence, that we venture to call God our Father."[1]

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1 John Calvin, Commentaries on Romans, p. 299.

He also affirms that "we do not rightly pray to God, unless we are surely persuaded in our hearts, that he is our Father, when we so call him with our lips."[2] He, too, places the assurance of sonship prior to the expression of it and, therefore, would deny that the expression is the witness. Of similar interest is the fact that Methodist writers succeeding Watson failed to maintain the strict distinction he established. After saying that the Spirit calls forth the cry of Father from the spirits of men, Beet avows that men know it to be no earthborn cry, but the voice of God's spirit within them. They, therefore, "accept it as a divine testimony that they are God's sons, and as a divine confirmation of their faith and hope."[3] Watson would have been sad to see one of his own communion deviate so far from what he considered to be the truth. He would have said to Beet that the cry to the Father, since it is indicative of the fruit of love, is, indeed, a witness to one's sonship; but it is not the divine witness; it is a part of the indirect witness of one's own spirit confirming the direct witness of the Spirit from which the cry must have come.

Watson would also object to the Revised Standard rendering of the text on the ground that in making the confirmation of the witness subsequent to the cry of Abba, Father, it tends to confuse the witness of the Holy Spirit with that of man and, thereby, produces a single testimony rather than a twofold.

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2 Calvin, op. cit. pp. 299-300.
3 Agar Beet, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, p. 395.

Unless the witness of the Spirit is prior to the cry, then it bears testimony to nothing more than man's spirit might discern for itself and, therefore, loses its distinct quality.

Watson's case stands or falls on these two distinctions in interpretation: that there are two separate witnesses, the one being directly borne to man by the Holy Spirit, convincing him of his acceptance as a son of God, and the other being the indirectly borne witness which man's own spirit may infer from the fruits which begin to appear in his life; that the assurance given by the witness of the Spirit is necessarily prior to any real love of God or any fruit which may be attested by one's own spirit.

What does the Greek text indicate concerning these points? In Romans 8:14 Paul says that those who are led (ἄγονται) by the Spirit of God are (εἰσιν) the sons of God. He has been speaking to the Romans in the present tense. The two major verbs in verse 15, however, are aorist. "For you did not receive (ἐλάβετε) the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear; but you received (ἐλάβετε) the Spirit of sonship." The transaction involved in their receiving a spirit is obviously completed. James Denney suggests that the time past refers to their baptism.[4] Taken as the words stand, however, they only indicate a completed experience by which Paul's hearers received in the place of a spirit of slavery, characterized by him as a state of fear, a spirit of sonship, characterized in opposition

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4 The Expositors Greek Testament, Romans 8:15.

to fear as a condition in which they recognize God as their Father. ἐν ᾧ κράζομεν may be translated, "In respect of (Luke 1:7; 1. Cor. 1:7) which we cry." Paul reverts to the present tense and continues in it. The same sequence of tenses is used in Galatians 4:6, "Because you are (ἐστε , present) sons, God has sent (ἐξαπέστειλεν , aorist) the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying (κρᾶζον , present participle) Abba, Father." Upon the basis of this, one may affirm that the granting of the Spirit of God's Son or the spirit of sonship is prior to the cry whereby one recognizes God as Father. Watson posits, however, that not only adoption but also assurance of that adoption must precede the cry. Can that be deduced from the Scriptural evidence? Is the receiving of the spirit of sonship synonymous with receiving a direct witness of the spirit? Watson thinks so. He says in regard to the spirit of sonship that Paul "refers to the Holy Spirit himself, because, in the next clause, you will see, he says, 'the Spirit itself,' or himself, or that same Spirit, 'beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.'. . .His office it is to give us in some way or other, a blessed testimony and assurance of our adoption into the family of God, an assurance that we are the children of God."[5] His case would have been strengthened had he pointed out that Paul indicates the result of the spirit of sonship to be trust and the recognition of God's love and Fatherhood, in opposition to the spirit of slavery, of which the result is fear. It may be concluded upon the basis of this verse that

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5 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. IV, p. 291.

sonship precedes the recognition of it by an individual; that the spirit of adoption brings to that individual a trust in, and love for, God, in opposition to fear; that in respect of the condition engendered by that spirit, the individual cries out to God as his Father. This confirms Watson's doctrine to this point. Is, however, the direct witness insisted upon by Watson synonymous with the Spirit of God's Son sent into one's heart crying, "Abba, Father." Watson's fine distinction cannot be maintained in this instance. Watson argues that the cry to God as Father can come only from one who already is assured of his adoption by God. In Galatians 4:4-6, the statement is simply made that the Spirit of God's Son is the agent responsible for the cry in man's heart. The condition is laid down that they are sons, but no mention is made of a previous assurance. This neither supports Watson's doctrine nor militates against it; for he, too, would say that the cry, when it does come, is the result of God's Spirit, or that of his Son's, in the heart. Is Watson's insistance on a direct witness of the Spirit prior to the fruits of the Spirit scriptural then? According to the Revised Standard version it is not. On the grounds of the above interpretation of Romans 8:14-16 it is indicated, but not insisted upon, as is evident in Galatians 4:4-6.

What of Watson's other distinction, that there are two separate witnesses, the direct witness of the Spirit and the indirect one of one's own spirit recognizing the fruits of the Spirit? In the passage from Romans Paul says, "The Spirit himself witnesses with (συμμαρτυρεῖ) our spirits that we are children of God." The verb, συμμαρτυρέω , is found in two other

passages, both in Romans. In Romans 2:15 Paul says that the consciences of the Gentiles witness with their deeds, and in Romans 9:1 that his own conscience witnesses with the fact that he speaks the truth in Christ. In both instances there was more than one witness; therefore, one may conclude that the verb was understood in the plural sense. In the Revised Standard translation the testimonies are said to occur simultaneously but are distinguished as two. Watson would charge that such a view really means only one witness. In the interpretation above, however, the occurence of two distinct testimonies may be legitimately maintained. On the basis of Galatians 4:4-6, there is only the Spirit of God's Son in the heart; and no further witness is intimated. It is clear, then, that Paul meant to be understood as indicating two witnesses, but that he did not attempt to delineate the method of their operation, nor did he hold them both to be necessarily distinct concomitants of adoption.

After having explored the passages referred to by Watson, can one conclude that his distinctions are valid according to Scripture? Certainly his interpretation is not invalid, but neither is it confirmed by a great number of scriptural passages supporting it. To assume Watson's own attitude, that is no proof against it. His doctrine is an integral part of his attempt to explain, perhaps in too much of an A.B.C. fashion, the process whereby a man might be saved, his attempt to describe the road along which he felt one must travel to redemption. His guides included not only the words of the Bible but also the theology of John Wesley and through him the experiences of

hundreds of Christian folk, in addition to those which he himself had occasion to observe. His thought must now be further examined in the light of theology and Christian experience before trying to evaluate it.

D. The Doctrine in the Light of Theology.

To Watson's mind there is no full announcement of the Gospel which does not include the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit,[1] nor, on the other hand, does the doctrine stand alone to be judged as an isolated truth.[2] It is a vital and integral part of the process whereby man is saved. In order to completely evaluate his position, therefore, his doctrine of the witness of the Spirit must be examined in the relationship it bears to what he would consider to be the other steps involved in salvation. Such is the purpose of this section.

A somewhat oversimplified version of Watson's soteriology may be stated thus: God has promised the forgiveness of sin to all who repent and believe; but neither repentance nor faith constitute the pardon, nor do they bear witness of the pardon; rather they are prerequisites of it.[3] Upon the conditions of contrition and faith in Christ, an act of justification takes place.[4] Justification is the pardoning of sin or forgiveness.[5] The immediate and inseparable consequence of that gracious procedure is adoption. These results are not kept secret by God but are made known to man.[6] Since the spirit of man can

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 243.
2 Watson, Works, Vol. V, p. 397.
3 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, pp. 263-4 and Vol. VIII, p. 278.
4 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 258.
5 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 263.
6 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 258.

take no cognizance of the mind of God, the Holy Spirit who knows God's mind bears witness to the accomplishment of forgiveness and adoption.[7] As soon as man is pardoned and receives the Spirit of adoption, or of witness to the adoption, regeneration, and the fruit of the Spirit begin to flow from both.[8] Although these actions must be stated as if in a temporal sequence, there is no time lag between them. At different times Watson affirms that the justified are "in that moment regenerate";[9] or, "To be 'in Christ' is, therefore, to be justified, and regeneration instantly follows."[10]

The witness of the Spirit is to one's justification and adoption by God. Watson constantly maintains the difference between justification, as forgiveness, and adoption, as God's acceptance of a justified individual as his son. At times he draws the line less distinctly, as when he refers to the justified as already "in Christ"; and he always speaks of the latter as concomitant to the former. To what extent is his view upheld by other theologians? Ritschl distinguishes between justification and reconciliation as the removal, respectively, of guilt and enmity of sin to God.[11] This distinction is so slight, however, that Taylor feels that they should be more clearly separated and says that "justification is the act of God which makes

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7 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 275 and Vol. IV, p. 293.
8 Watson, Works, Vol. V, pp. 158-59 and Vol. IV, pp. 300-301.
9 Watson, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 264.
10 Ibid., p. 255.
11 Albrecht Ritschl, A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, pp. 8-9.

reconciliation possible; it is the ethical condition of reconciliation, the gift to the sinner of that standing by which alone he can enter into fellowship with God."[12] Pope, a Methodist theologian of the generation succeeding Watson, also limits the scope of justification as "pardon; but more than pardon, the imputation of righteousness: not however Christian righteousness, but the benefit of it."[13] His idea unites Ritschl's removal of guilt and enmity in the content of justification, but continues to distinguish that from what Watson would call adoption or reconciliation. Following the beginning of the present century the concepts began to be lost in one another. W. H. Moberly interprets forgiveness as "the full restoration of delicate personal relations between friends or between parent and child."[14] Forgiveness does not consist of the remission of penalty, explains Temple; "to forgive is to restore the old relationship."[15] R. N. Flew maintains that "God's forgiveness is never a mere passing of the word, a dumb turning of the back, a formal canceling of a debt. It implies a personal relationship, violated and now restored."[16] Each of the above three men extends the meaning of forgiveness beyond that which Watson attributes to it in his definition of justification. Taylor concurs in the significance of Watson's distinction:

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12 Vincent Taylor, Forgiveness and Reconciliation, p. 77.

13 W. B. Pope, A Compendium of Christian Theology, p. 497.

14 Taylor, op. cit., p. 1, quoted from W. H. Moberly, Foundations, p. 293.

15 Loc. cit., quoted from W. Temple, Christus Veritas, p. 257.

16 Loc. cit., quoted from R. N. Flew, The Forgiveness of Sins (Manuals of Fellowship), p. 5.

> It may well be that the blurring of the New Testament distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation, however much it may be defended, is in part responsible for our modern neglect of justification, to our great loss in Christian theology and experience.[17]

He continues to develop what he considers to be the New Testament relation between the two concepts. Forgiveness is not the remission of penalties but of sin. It is not presented as the equivalent of reconciliation nor as the restoration of fellowship between persons. It is "action directed to the removal or annulment of some obstacle or barrier to reconciliation. . .It is a stage antecedent to reconciliation; it is that which makes reconciliation possible."[18] After having thus defined forgiveness, he points out that for Paul the idea of "being justified" has a richer connotation than that of "being forgiven" and is "more adequate to express the ideas of God's gracious action in restoring sinners to Himself and of man's standing with God as a redeemed personality."[19] He, therefore, defines justification:

> It is the divine activity in which God gives effect to His redeeming work in Christ by making possible that righteous mind necessary to communion with Himself.[20]

Thus, Watson might find later voices than his own to defend his distinction between justification and adoption, or reconciliation, although he would not agree with them all as to exactly where the line should be drawn.

When one is justified, he is adopted as a son of God.

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17 Taylor, op. cit., p. 34.
18 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
19 Ibid., p. 35.
20 Ibid., p. 79.

Although the actions are separate, they are concomitant; and the latter flows directly from the former. The Spirit bears its testimony of the condition of one who has reached the second state.[21] If Watson is sometimes tedious in his indefatigable attempt to simplify the experience of salvation into an A.B.C. formula, it is because he is trying to guard against what he would regard as the confusion evident in the following passage:

> Repentance is the subjective side of the forgiveness of sins. It is one facet of that unanalysable Divine-human experience in which the sinner while bewailing his sin - because bewailing his sin - knows himself reconciled to the God of righteousness.[22]

Watson would declare it utterly ridiculous that a man might know himself reconciled to God while he was bewailing his sins, much less because he was bewailing them. The bewailing of sins in repentance is a prerequisite, with faith, of justification. The act of justification itself must be an accomplished fact before one may be completely reconciled to God and accepted as a son. Since the adoption takes place in the mind of God, man can have no knowledge of it until God reveals it to him by the direct witness of the Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. He agrees with Calvin that in the order of things the adoption itself must precede the testimony.[23] What of the testimony itself, the inward witness, the assurance?

In the usage of the Gospel, assurance is simply a fact.

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21 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 253.

22 Robert Mackintosh, Essays Towards a New Theology, p. 50.

23 John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians, p. 120, on Gal. 4:6.

"The Samaritan leper, the publican Zacchaeus, the woman who anointed Jesus' feet, and the repentant thief had the Master's word for it. To them this certainly was neither presumptuous nor a special privilege, nor a duty. They simply knew that they were saved."[24] Although Jesus left the earth in his bodily form, he did not leave his children without a certainty as to their spiritual condition. Calvin strongly affirms, "Let this truth then stand sure, - that no one can be called a son of God, who does not know himself to be such."[25] Luther speaks with equal conviction on the matter:

> But we must be assured and out of doubt that we are under grace, that if we please God for Christ's sake, and that we have the Holy Ghost: "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his." Romans 8:9.[26]

He further indicates the nature of the testimony:

> But Christ is most certain in his spirit that he pleaseth God, etc.; therefore we also having the same spirit of Christ, must be assured that we are under grace for his sake, which is most assured. This I have said concerning the inward testimony.[27]

Among the Protestant divines of England during the seventeenth century the doctrine of assurance found approval.[28] This was prompted by Hooker. John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, after alluding to the testimony of the conscience, described the testimony of the Spirit as "a superadded taste out

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24 Bernhard Citron, New Birth, pp. 179-80.
25 Calvin, Commentaries on Romans, p. 301, Rom. 8:16.
26 Martin Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, p. 374.
27 Ibid., p. 375.
28 Howard Watkin-Jones, The Holy Spirit from Arminius to Wesley, p. 306.

of God's right hand, as it were a piece of heaven in the soul. . . chasing away all our dark and gloomy doubtings before it."[29] A direct witness of the Spirit is upheld by Owen in his work, Concerning the Holy Spirit, in which he affirms that the Holy Spirit testifies with our spirits by "some such act of His as evidenceth itself to be from Him immediately unto them that are concerned in it."[30] By the eighteenth century, however, the attitude of the English divines had considerably cooled toward the doctrine; and most of them had become definitely hostile, as exemplified in Joseph Butler's conversation with Wesley previously quoted. That conversation may not have been Butler's last word on the matter, however; for Watkin-Jones presents this scene of the Bishop's room as death approached:

> When lying on his death bed, he summoned his chaplain and said to him: 'Though I have endeavoured to avoid sin, and to please God to the utmost of my power, yet, from the consciousness of perpetual infirmities, I am still afraid to die.' 'My lord,' said the chaplain, 'you have forgotten that Jesus is a Savior.' 'True,' was the answer, 'but how shall I know that he is a Savior for me?' 'My lord,' replied the chaplain, 'it is written, 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.' 'True,' said Butler, 'and I am surprised that, though I have read that Scripture a thousand times over, I never felt its virtue till this moment; and now I die happy.'[31]

Historically as well as scripturally Watson, following Wesley, was sound in affirming that God in some way grants an authentication of one's acceptable status in His sight. Many agreed with them thus far. Wesley, however, went further than

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29 Watkin-Jones, op. cit., p. 307.
30 Ibid., p. 308.
31 Ibid., p. 314.

others might have wanted to go in attempting to analyze the experience.[32] He stated that a twofold testimony is to be expected: the testimony of the Spirit, which is "an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God, immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God."[33]; and the testimony of one's own spirit, which is "the testimony of our own conscience, that God hath given us to be holy of heart, and holy in outward conversation. It is the consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of Adoption, the tempers mentioned in the word of God, as belonging to His adopted children;. . .a consciousness that we are inwardly conformed by the Spirit of God, to the image of His Son."[34] Watson adopted Wesley's explanation entirely and elaborated it in his defense of it, as has been seen.

Watson defended his doctrine against three particular errors frequently made in his day in understanding the twofold witness. If he were writing today, a single volume would not suffice for him to correct all the mistakes he might find in the course of a day's reading. One of his contemporaries, whom he never mentions in this respect, avowed that God's only testimonies were his word "made plain to my conviction, and His own work upon me made plain to my conscience,"[35] which for Watson

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32 Franz Hildebrandt, From Luther to Wesley, pp. 45-46.

33 John Wesley, The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, Vol. V, p. 124.

34 Ibid., p. 115.

35 Thomas Chalmers, Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, p. 70.

would exclude a direct testimony. Since his time the twofold witness has been variously interpreted as: "the subjective testimony of conscience, confirming the objective testimony of a man's works or actions [36]"; the third trinitarian person co-witnessing with a believer and confirming "the testimony of the believers conscience [37]"; the adding of "His infallible testimony to the testimony of our own spirits," which assures us "that our filial confidence is no delusion [38]" (This is directly opposite from Watson); "a witness borne in the whole Church, which supports and sustains the witness of the individual soul. . .Behind his own spiritual consciousness, with all its vicissitudes, lies the inspired consciousness of the whole body, the witness of the Spirit [39]";"the authority of the word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit with us" guaranteeing "the certainty of one's salvation." [40] Watson would agree with none of the above. For that matter, no two agree with each other. Who then is correct? Can that question be answered? Before further examining Watson's doctrine in the light of experience, it is necessary to inquire into its relation to one other point in his theology.

After one has been pardoned by God, adopted by God, and granted the testimony of God's Spirit to that fact, then, but not until then, the fruit of the Spirit becomes manifest in his life.

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36 William Sandy and A. C. Headlam, A Critical and Exigetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 203.

37 W. G. T. Shedd, A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary upon the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, p. 248.

38 Agar Beet, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, p. 236.

39 Charles Gore, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, a Practical Exposition, p. 295.

40 Citron, op. cit., p. 178.

He then may love God; for he is sure of his reconciliation to God.[41] All holiness, therefore, is dependent on one's assurance of his right relation with God. Again there is no time lag; for regeneration flows instantaneously from forgiveness, adoption, and the assurance of the Spirit. Indeed, the first outward sign of that which has taken place in the mind of God is the insuppressible cry unto God as Father. When this and other fruits of the Spirit appear, the recognition of them certifies the assurance previously given by the Spirit. If holiness is dependent upon the witness of the Spirit, then it is equally true that full assurance cannot be had without holiness of life. Watson would charge Robert Mackintosh with meaningless confusion in regard to regeneration when he says:

> Repentance, which is the subjective side of the forgiveness of sins, is equivalent to regeneration. . .Regeneration is just repentance; repentance is just regeneration.[42]

He would also find it impossible to agree with Taylor that the "work of regeneration both precedes and follows justification."[43] The work of the Spirit precedes justification, but it is the Spirit of bondage, of conviction, not of adoption. To say that regeneration should do so is a mistake since it must follow the completion of justification and its attestation.

Thus, Watson's doctrine does not stand alone but is a vital link necessary to the remainder of his theology.

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41 Watson, Works, Vol. XI, p. 265.
42 Mackintosh, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
43 Taylor, op. cit., p. 77.

E. The Doctrine in the Light of Religious Experience.

Watson's doctrine of the witness of the Spirit assumes a set and unchanging pattern by which a sinner is brought into a new relationship to God, is reborn as a son of God, and goes forth from that rebirth to lead a new life of holiness. The direct testimony of God's spirit is the key which unlocks the door to that new life. Not only is his a doctrine in theology but also it is a description of the psychological processes involved in conversion. The question, therefore, becomes not only, "Is it logical?" but also, "Does it conform to the facts of experience?"

What is conversion according to the definition given to it by psychologists? Mellone metaphorically describes it as "the shifting of the 'center of gravity' of the inner life."[1] William James describes it as follows:

> To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.[2]

It is of importance in relation to Watson to note that the key word in his description is "consciously." The idea of unity

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1 Sidney Herbert Mellone, The Bearings of Psychology on Religion, p. 152.

2 William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 189.

and harmony is further expressed by Hughes:

> We must admit that the new psychology is perfectly right in insisting that whatever else conversion may be, it is a restored harmony. . .But it is even more than this. It is a harmony of man's whole nature. . . We may, then, accept this view of it, as the restoration or achievement of harmony and unification of the whole being, whereby it achieves fullness of life in God.[3]

He elaborates his meaning of a "recovery of harmony within" as a unifying of life which, in the deepest sense, can only come by a realization of harmony and union with God and which "does not seem then to move within the region of ideas, but of connotations and, most of all, of feeling."[4] All of the above descriptions indicate that in conversion a change must take place, a change from a divided, inharmonious self to a unified self which bears a new relationship to religious realities and to God.

Is there a definite pattern by which the change takes place? A difference of opinion appears concerning this point. Starbuck, however, affirms that six factors seem to be consistently present in cases of conversion:

1. Self surrender.
2. Determination, or the exercise of the will.
3. The sense of forgiveness.
4. The sense of divine help and of the divine presence.
5. A spontaneous awakening.
6. A feeling of oneness with God.[5]

A similarity with Watson's direct witness of the Spirit is seen in the phrases "the sense of forgiveness," "the sense of the

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3 T. H. Hughes, The New Psychology and Religious Experience, p. 236.
4 Ibid., p. 223.
5 Ibid., p. 224.

divine presence," and "a feeling of oneness with God." Hughes finds in many conversions a less complicated pattern. A person turns away from self, from his own conflict, and transfers thoughts and feelings to God or to Jesus Christ. Relief comes in the turning away from the conflict; and a sense of harmony and peace comes in the consciousness of reposing in God or in Christ. Success in such an experience always brings joy and a renewal of energy which makes further success possible.[6] One notices again the use of the terms "sense" and "consciousness" in relation to the resulting harmony, peace, and union with God.

Can one hope to find a single pattern for all conversions? Is such a search an attempt to force human experience into a mould which does not exist? James points out that just as one used to hear of two ways, lysis and crisis, one gradual and the other abrupt, by which a person might recover from a bodily disease; so, likewise, there are two ways in the spiritual realm, one gradual and the other abrupt, whereby "inner unification" may occur.[7] The experiences of Paul and John Wesley are indicative of the abrupt way, while John Bunyan and Tolstoy are examples of the more gradual way. Are these two processes basically different? Is one the result of divine intervention as opposed to a natural growth? Mellone does not find such a conclusion necessarily true.[8] Although the person for whom the conversion experience is abrupt is usually an individual "subject

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6 Hughes, op. cit., p. 240.
7 James, op. cit., p. 183.
8 Mellone, op. cit., p. 162.

to invasive experiences from that region of the mind where tendencies have been working unconsciously,"[9] the one for whom it is gradual, also, finds it is generally "a process of unification of a divided self, and has its natural sources in the unconscious mind."[10] In both sudden and gradual conversions certain features seem to be present: "the individual's very self seems changed; the change seems wrought upon him by an outside agency; it takes place in the mental factors of character; and there is a positive feeling of attaining to a better life."[11] In view of the last clause, Tolstoy's own testimony is interesting:

> Just how or when the change took place I cannot tell. But as insensibly and gradually as the force of life had been annulled within me, and I had reached my moral death-bed, just as gradually and imperceptibly did the energy of life come back.[12]

Watson would, indeed, say that "there is a positive feeling of attaining to a better life;" but to say that the energy of life comes back "gradually and imperceptibly" is to say that a tree grows gradually without any roots. All energy for the new born life is derived from its awareness of its condition as reborn. This is a significant point for the study of Watson's view. Although the pyschologist might say that essentially the same factors are evident in both sudden and gradual conversions, for Watson the awareness of one's changed relationship, his "unification and harmony" with God, is instantaneous upon the act itself or there are no grounds for claiming the experience to be

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9 Mellone, op. cit., p. 162.
10 Ibid., p. 152.
11 Loc. cit.
12 James, op. cit., p. 185.

a conversion. He would say that God's Spirit as the Spirit of conviction sometimes works gradually within an individual producing repentance and faith; but the actual change, the cessation of conflict, the unification, and the primary awareness of it are instantaneous. He would say to Tolstoy, "There was a first moment when you perceived a change in your condition; that was the moment in which the change took place. The energy of life flowed back to you because of your consciousness of the change." But the fact remains that Tolstoy did not give that explanation to his experience.

Watson's theology, as well as Methodism's as a whole, has tended to place the emphasis on an instantaneous conversion. In this respect, it has remained truly Wesleyan, in spite of the development of a program of Christian education in the latter part of the nineteenth and in the twentieth century which has tended to emphasize the concept of growth. James affirms that in this respect Methodism surely follows, "if not the healthier-minded, yet on the whole the profounder spiritual instinct."[13] In referring to sudden conversion he says:

> It is natural that those who personally have traversed such an experience should carry away a feeling of its being a miracle rather than a natural process. Voices are often heard, lights seen, or visions witnessed; automatic motor phenomena occur; and it always seems, after the surrender of the personal will, as if an extraneous higher power had flooded in and taken possession. Moreover the sense of renovation, safety, cleanness, rightness, can be so marvelous and jubilant as well to warrant one's belief in a radically new substantial nature.[14]

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13 James, op. cit., pp. 227-28.
14 Ibid., p. 228.

It is the "sense of renovation, safety, cleanness, rightness" which occupies Watson's thinking as the direct witness of the Spirit.

After describing the self-despair of a soul struggling and then finding salvation, James affirms that with "those who undergo it in its fullness, no criticism avails to cast doubt on its reality. They know; for they have actually felt the higher powers, in giving up the tension of their personal will."[15] One man speaks of feeling the higher powers as "floods of light and glory."

> The very heavens seemed to open and pour down rays of light and glory. Not for a moment only, but all day and night, floods of light and glory seemed to pour through my soul, and oh, how I was changed, and everything became new. My horses and hogs and even everybody seemed changed.[16]

A former drunkard from Jerry M'Auley's mission in New York refers to the experience as a "feeling of safety, of freedom."

> Never with mortal tongue can I describe that moment. Although up to that moment my soul had been filled with indescribable gloom, I felt the glorious brightness of the noonday sun shine into my heart. I felt I was a free man. Oh, the precious feeling of safety, of freedom, of resting on Jesus! I felt that Christ with all his brightness and power had come into my life; that, indeed, old things had passed away and all things had become new.[17]

To David Brainerd it came as a "new inward apprehension" of God.

> Here in a mournful melancholy state I was attempting to pray; but found no heart to indulge in that or any other duty; my former concern, exercise, and religious affections were now gone. I thought that the Spirit of God had quite left

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15 James, op. cit., p. 110.
16 Ibid., p. 250.
17 Ibid., p. 203.

> me. . .then, as I was walking in a thick grove, an unspeakable glory seemed to open to the apprehension of my soul. I do not mean any external brightness, nor any imagination of a body of light, but it was a new inward apprehension or view that I had of God, such as I never had before, nor anything which had the least resemblance to it.[18]

A woman speaks of the experience directly as a "realization of forgiveness.

> I plead for mercy, and had a vivid realization of forgiveness and renewal of my nature. When rising from my knees I exclaimed, "Old things have passed away, all things have become new." It was like entering another world, a new state of existence.[19]

One cannot help but notice the repetition of certain ideas in the above illustrations. In each case, whether it was a "sense of," a "feeling of," or an "apprehension of," the individual was certain of the experience of which he or she was a part. That certainty was apparently mediated directly to them as a part of the experience itself. Three of the four refer to the feeling that a change had taken place; and the fourth describes a change. All of them speak of the experience in terms of great joy, of relaxation from tension, of being "in touch with a larger world of power."[20]

In analyzing such experiences of "assurance" James finds that they all tend to have three characteristics in common.[21] The first is the loss of worry, the sense that all is ultimately well, a feeling of peace and harmony. In the case

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18 James, op. cit., p. 213.
19 Ibid., pp. 249-50.
20 Hughes, op. cit., p. 255.
21 James, op. cit., p. 248.

of Christians the certainty of God's grace, of justification, and of salvation usually accompanies the change; but this may be entirely lacking and yet the peace remain the same. Watson's approving nod would have turned into a frown of doubt at the last clause. The second characteristic is the perception of truths not known before. Watson would again nod in vigorous agreement; for no man can know the real nature of God's love, for instance, until God's Spirit witnesses to his adoption by the loving Father. The third feature of the assured state is the change which the world itself often seems to undergo. Watson would agree that "all things become as new."

Is Watson's doctrine valid, then, in the light which psychology has thrown on religious experience? If he had been less dogmatic, a convinced affirmative might have been given. As his doctrine stands, it posits the same general outline confirmed by the psychologists. First, one undergoes a period of rising tension, of conflict, or as Watson would say, a period of struggle with the Spirit of conviction. Then, one gives up the struggle in a surrender of self, which is another way of saying, for Watson, the giving of self in the act of faith. Following the cessation of struggle, one experiences a "sense" of peace, safety, joy, freedom. Watson would say that this is the inward witness of God's Spirit bearing to one a "comfortable persuasion" of his acceptance by God and his new relationship with God. The world seems changed, says the psychologist. Indeed it does, says Watson; for a changed person enters the world to live a new life of holiness. James even goes so far as to describe what Watson would call the witness of one's own spirit, but which James

refers to as "the real witness of the spirit," as that which is found only "in the disposition of the genuine child of God, the permanently patient heart, and the love of self eradicated."[22] James adds a statement which pin-points the difficulty in maintaining Watson's doctrine, "And this, it has to be admitted is also found in those who pass no crisis, and may even be found outside of Christianity altogether."[23] Watson presents his doctrine as a map which must be followed explicitly if one is to be saved. He charted one route, but all men do not travel by the same road. Even Paul did not try to produce a systematic outline of steps which could be depended upon to usher one all along the way to salvation. He laid down the principle that "the just shall live by faith," but he advised the Philippians to work out their salvation with "fear and trembling." Whereas in general outline Watson's doctrine is an accurate description of conversion, many people have doubtless found God, through faith in Christ, whose experiences did not follow the precise order described by him. The very existence of other interpretations of the Witness of the Spirit in his day by equally devout men is evidence of the fact that God may not deal in detail with every human heart in the same fashion.

What may be said, then, of Watson's doctrine? From the point of view of Scripture, although the references are few, he does have scriptural ground for asserting that there is a two-fold witness to one's adoption: the Spirit of God's direct testimony to the individual, and the witness of one's own spirit

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22 James, op. cit., p. 239.
23 Loc. cit.

confirming the former by the evidences of fruit of the Spirit in life. The doctrine occupies a logical and necessary position in his soteriology. As to its relation to actual experience, a state of assurance, corresponding to that which he affirms is given by the Holy Spirit, is evident in most conversions, but is not limited by the conditions set upon it by Watson. After thus criticising Watson, this must be said: although, in his effort to make it plain, he tended to oversimplify and make rigid a complex human-divine experience, he did accentuate a truth which since John Wesley's Aldersgate experience has historically and spiritually been a part of Methodism, a source of power in its preaching, a source of power in its bringing men into a living relationship with God through Christ. God does grant to His children a witness by his Spirit, an assurance. There is a "clear consciousness of the tremendous objective force greater than ourselves which God has provided for the salvation of the world, and which, by appropriation or assimilation, has entered into our own lives."[24] In speaking of Methodism, one of its historians has said, "Once let it as a church lose this note, and its historic justification has perished."[25] Watson grasped the significance of the doctrine and reaccented it for his own day.

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24 W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, and George Eayers, A New History of Methodism, Vol. I, p. 30-31.

25 Ibid., p. 27.

CHAPTER 5

DEFENSE OF WESLEYAN METHODISM

A. From Outside Foes.

Watson's ready pen was early applied to "A Defence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the West Indies" (1817) and "A Defence of the Eternal Sonship of Christ" (1818). It was inevitable that it should be called into service on behalf of Wesleyan Methodism itself. Over a period of ten years (1820-1830) he was at various times called upon or felt himself moved to defend the church from aspersions cast upon it from those outside its fold and also from dissensions arising within its own membership. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the major issues which stimulated Watson's pen in this respect. In so doing, the chapter will be divided into two sections: one dealing with the charges leveled at Wesleyan Methodism from without, and the second dealing with the crucial points of difference which arose within the communion.

A. Defense of Wesleyan Methodism from outside foes.

On two occasions Watson attempted to answer voices raised against Wesleyan Methodism from the outside. The first incitement to his pen was the publication of Robert Southey's Life of Wesley in the early part of the year 1820. The details relating to that work and Watson's reply are found in the present

study in the chapter dealing with Watson as a writer. No more need be said here than that Southey made allegations against the practices of Methodism which Watson attempted to correct at the request of the Conference.

The other occasion which prompted Watson to a similar defense was the publication of a series of reviews in the Christian Guardian during the years 1824 and 1825. The reviews were instigated by the opinions expressed in a pamphlet, "Observations on the System of Wesleyan Methodism," by Mark Robinson, a Methodist preacher in Beverley who advocated a closer unity between Methodism and the Established Church. Watson found cause to dispute some of the assertions made by the reviewer.

Watson defended Wesleyan Methodism from five main charges which he considered to have been brought against it by Southey and the Christian Guardian:

1. The charge that Methodism exhibited enthusiastic extravagances in both action and doctrine, made by Southey.

2. The charge that Wesley and Methodism were moved by a tendency to separate from the Established Church, also made by Southey.

3. The charge that Methodism had in fact deviated from the true Wesleyan principles, alleged by the Christian Guardian.

4. The charge that Methodism had alienated the people from the Established Church, presented by both Southey and the Christian Guardian.

5. The charge that Methodist ministers had introduced the administering of the sacraments to their people and the ordaining of themselves in order to serve their own purposes,

alleged by the Christian Guardian.

With regard to the above points, it must be admitted that Watson was extraordinarily sensitive and took exception at the slightest provocation.

1. Watson first complains that Southey's Life of Wesley leaves the impression upon a reader who may not be acquainted with the entire history of Wesley and Methodism that, in its early stages, wherever Wesley and his preachers went, scenes of disorder and confusion appeared among their hearers, and that outcries, convulsions, and ecstasies uniformly marked the progress of Methodism.[1] He might have been referring to a passage such as the following:

> It deserves particular notice that no fits or convulsions had yet been produced under Whitfield's preaching, though he preached the same doctrine as the Wesleys,. . .But when Wesley, on the second day after his arrival, was preaching to a society in Wapping, the symptoms reappeared with their usual violence, and were more than usually contagious.[2]

Southey's error, he feels, arises in part from his having compiled his Life only from books, and without sympathetic understanding of Wesley or the Methodists. He is presenting a warped picture.

> He has been attracted to that stream of religious influence which Mr. Wesley was the instrument of conveying into every part of the nation, only where, by accidental occurrences, it whirled into eddies, and was chafed among the shallows; but he has refused to follow it when, in deep and noiseless flow, it spread along its course the beauty and fruit of moral vegetation.[3]

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1 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. V, p. 424.
2 Robert Southey, The Life of John Wesley, pp. 165-66.
3 Watson, op. cit., p. 425.

He points out to Southey that Methodists "believe that no man can repent without sorrow, believe without joy, or pray in the true spirit of devotion without obtaining inward support and consolation."[4] It is, therefore, improper to place into one category those cases of "irregular and exuberant feeling" along with all the instances in which Wesley's congregations were powerfully affected under his sermons and in which people were brought through strong distress into a state of inward peace.[5] Nor was it correct of Southey to suggest that such extravagant effects were new. If he had been better acquainted with ecclesiastical history, "he would have known that great and rapid effects of this kind,. . .were produced in the first ages of Christianity; and that not without 'outcries,' and strong corporeal as well as mental emotion, nay, and extravagancies too, and, by perversion, condemnable heresies, and a rank and real enthusiasm."[6] If Southey had better understood Methodism, he would have known, Watson says, that the true test of Methodist character had always been not the effects evidenced during preaching but subsequent conduct, a "steady, fervent, habitual, and practical piety."[7]

Thus, Watson countercharges that Southey presents a one-sided view; he lumps cases of real conversion with those of actual extravagance; he falsely accuses that the effects produced are new; and he witnesses to his ignorance of Methodism

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4 Watson, op. cit., p. 444.
5 Ibid., p. 431.
6 Ibid., p. 432.
7 Ibid., pp. 444-445, p. 431, and p. 430.

by not recognizing that such effects were never accepted as a test of true Christian character.

By 1820 when Watson debated Southey's application of the terms "enthusiasm" and "enthusiastic extravagances" to Methodism, he was waging battle in the cool of the evening after the heat and fury of the main encounter concerning the matter had spent itself. Following the fierce expression of religion which took recourse to the sword during the seventeenth century, the pendulum of religion swung to the other extreme in eighteenth century England. Moderation became the watchword of the religious man; and enthusiasm, whether for that which was good or evil, was regarded with suspicion and hostility. In 1739 the Bishop of London confessed to John and Charles Wesley that he believed George Whitfield's Journal to be tainted with enthusiasm.[8] During the years which followed, the cry of enthusiasm was often lifted against John Wesley himself, as is evident from his Journals and letters. For example, in 1750 he wrote in answer to Amicus Veritatis, a correspondent:

> You affirm. . ."Enthusiasm is the fountain from whence this evil (Methodism) flows." I cannot allow this without some proof that either Christianity or Methodism (another name for the same thing) flows from enthusiasm or is any way contrary to reason.[9]

From the uses of the word in the literature of the eighteenth century it is obvious that the burden of connotations carried by the term far outweighed any denotative meaning it might have

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8 Charles Wesley, The Journal of Charles Wesley, Feb. 21, 1739, p. 223.

9 John Wesley, The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, Vol. III, p. 26.

had, in much the same manner as the word "communism" in American usage today. For this reason Watson was particularly anxious that Methodism not be tainted with the term.

2. Concerning Wesley's tendency to separate from the Established Church, Southey says:

> Schism, according to Wesley, has almost always been wrongly defined a separation from a church, instead of a separation in a church. Upon his own definition, he himself was more particularly guilty of the offence; and however much he contended against those of his followers who were for separating from the Establishment, it is scarcely possible that he should not have foreseen the separation to which all his measures tended.[10]

In speaking of Wesley's ordination of Richard Watcoat and Thomas Vasey he says:

> On this occasion his actions spoke for him: by arrogating the episcopal authority, he took the only step which was wanting to form the Methodists into a distinct body of separatists from the Church.[11]

In answer to this charge that Wesley tended to separate from the Church of England, Watson divides Wesley's work into three stages and then gives what he considers to be the real causes for the separation. The first stage of Wesley's career began with his itinerant ministry at home. His object, far from personal ambition, was no other than to revive the spirit of religion in the Church of England.[12] Since he did not conceive himself to be bound by his ordination to undertake the care of a particular parish, and was confirmed by his ordaining

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10 Robert Southey, op. cit., p. 190.
11 Ibid., p. 305.
12 Watson, op. cit., p. 449.

Bishop in so believing, he went out to preach and to bring people not into a sect but into the Church,[13] a Church which was in dire need of a revival.[14]

The very success of his efforts led to the second stage. More people were turned to religion than Wesley and his friends among the clergy were able to care for effectively. Since the clergy in general made no provision for such people, Wesley concluded that "the expedient that remained was to find someone among themselves, who was upright in heart, and of sound judgment in the things of God, and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them as he was able in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation."[15] Although the process was irregular, Wesley resorted to it rather than see those who had been brought under religious influence fall away for lack of instruction and care. Even at this stage, however, Wesley did not anticipate separation as a necessary consequence.[16] Rather, he took precautions to see that no obstacle should stand in the way of the closest connexion between the societies and the Establishment. No societies held meetings during the hours of public services; no lay preachers were allowed to administer the sacraments to those with whom they labored.[17]

During the last period of Wesley's life a separation was foreseen as probable; but even then, it had no sanction

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13 Watson, op. cit., p. 454.
14 Ibid., p. 451 - 452.
15 Ibid., p. 456.
16 Loc. cit.
17 Ibid., p. 457.

from him. Until his last breath he employed his influence in such a way that if separation should ensue, it should be deprived of all hostility and bitterness.[18]

The real cause for the separation, Watson affirms, lay not in Wesley's actions but in the conditions which made them necessary, namely, that "the Clergy, generally, did not preach the doctrines of their own Church and of the Reformation; and that many of them did not adorn their profession in their lives."[19] Thus, Watson admits that Wesley incorporated changes which tended to separation, but he denies that a separation was Wesley's desire.

Watson is correct in acknowledging that Wesley's actions tended to sever Methodism from the Established Church in spite of all his personal statements confirming his allegiance to it. As a more recent Methodist historian has said, "Wesley, like a strong and skillful rower, looked one way, while every stroke of his oar took him in the opposite direction."[20] Watson, however, oversimplifies the issue by attributing the separation completely to a necessity imposed by the degenerate state of the Established Church at that time. He might have pointed out that Wesley in the catholicity of his spirit held a doctrine of the Church which could not have been harmonized with the doctrine of the Anglican Church. This question of Wesley and separation is carefully considered by W. J. Sparrow Simpson in his book, John

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18 Watson, op. cit., p. 458.
19 Ibid., p. 459.
20 W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, George Eayers, A New History of Methodism, Vol. I, p. 488.

Wesley and the Church of England.

3. If Southey had answered Watson, he probably would have said, "If Wesley did not desire or intend a separation, then the Methodist body has certainly deviated from his principles." Actually that charge was brought against the Methodists in the Christian Guardian in 1824 and 1825, but not particularly because of separation.

> But though Methodists will not readily allow that it (Methodism) is deteriorated, yet all must acknowledge that it is materially altered since the death of Mr. Wesley. Were that venerable man to return to the world, and revisit his numerous societies, he would not know his own children; so far are they departed from those peculiarities which distinguished the Methodism of his day.[21]

With particular reference to doctrine, the Christian Guardian accused the Methodists of having confused the distinction drawn by Wesley between faith and assurance. With reference to the practices of Methodism a rather caustic contrast was drawn between the "early" and "modern" Methodists:

> Were we to attempt a contrast between early and Modern Methodists, we should say, the former were zealous, ardent, simple, devoted christians; evincing a high degree of self denial, contempt for the world, compassion for perishing sinners; carrying at times their zeal beyond all due bounds, and often advancing very wild and fanciful ideas; losing sight of the rules of propriety, politeness, and prudence; but yet patient in tribulation, unwearied in exertion, walking closely with their God, and seeking, at great personal risk, to preach the Gospel to the poor, to miners and colliers and the most depraved and wretched of mankind. Of Modern Methodism we are compelled to fear that there is less simplicity, less humility, less zeal for their Master's honour; more anxiety for the honour of their own party; more love of

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21 Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine, Vol. XVI, July, 1824, p. 274.

> show, display, accommodation, deference and reputation among men, with more of worldly policy and contrivance; more attention to the rich and great; and more desire to intrude into parishes and places where Christ is already preached, than to seek out and instruct those who are really destitute.[22]

In answer to the Christian Guardian's allegation concerning doctrine Watson denies that there had been a confusion between faith and assurance and affirms, "The most simple person among us could have told the reviewer that, as assurance, or 'a sense of pardon,' is consequent on believing, it must be distinguished from believing."[23] He then attacks the Christian Guardian on the basis of its statement:

> The fact is, the reviewer got hold of a quotation from Mr. Wesley which he did not understand; and he takes it as giving a sanction to a favorite notion of the Guardian, that among persons to whom the Gospel is clearly preached, a sense of pardon is not connected with justifying faith, except in some special cases.[24]

With regard to the charge concerning the practices of Methodists Watson does not attempt to refute it. By his silence he concedes that Methodist practices had changed since Wesley's death so that the form of Methodism was somewhat altered, but he retorts:

> The Methodism of old times, and the irregularity of Mr. Wesley, were just as little agreeable to the High Churchmen of his day as modern Methodism is to the same class of men in the present; and the Methodism of Mr. Wesley's time would be but little more agreeable to the party of the Christian Guardian, than the form which

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22 Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine, Vol. XVII, Nov., 1825, p. 350.
23 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 167.
24 Loc. cit.

it has now assumed.[25]

Watson deals with the issues involved in this question in only a superficial way. Actually the Methodism of his day was associated with that of Wesley's on at least three levels. On the first level, the surface, Methodism had positively altered the designs of Wesley. This is seen in its separation from the Church in spite of Wesley's affirmation of allegiance to it. On the second level Methodism had simply carried to their conclusions certain principles upon which Wesley acted. In that respect, although the outward circumstances of the societies were changed, no real violation of Wesley's principles was involved. Hindsight discloses that on a third and deeper level, whereas the principles of Wesley were being carried to their logical ends, the spirit of Methodism was being changed. The birth of the Primitive Methodists was in measure both the result of and a revolt against this subtle change. Methodism was presenting a more "refined" and "respectable" appeal.

4. To the accusation brought by both Southey and the Christian Guardian that Methodism had alienated people from the Established Church,[26] Watson offers three answers. In the first place, Methodism began by meeting a need. Most of her early members were gleaned from the ranks of the religiously careless, from those who had little knowledge and no experience of the power of religion.[27] As for their being alienated from the Church,

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25 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, pp. 138-39.
26 Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine, Vol. XVI, July, 1824, p. 274.
27 Watson, Works, Vol. V, pp. 472-73.

they were never such as to consider themselves properly members of it. Those, however, who were members were at liberty to remain so and to frequent her communion.[28]

In the second place, the Church is greatly indebted to Methodism for her own higher character and better condition.[29] In order to judge fairly the "evil" which has resulted to the Church because of the efforts of Wesley, one should consider what the state of the country and Church would probably be if he and his associates had never appeared.[30]

Thirdly, under the laws of religious liberty free access to the population is granted to all protected sects. Although the Established Church has her "legal rights in their tithes and offerings, of which we have no wish that she should be deprived in any way, . . .she has none exclusively in their souls."[31]

In spite of his defensive fervor, Watson maintained an attitude of admiration for the Established Church.

> I would not forget that she is "the mother of us all"; and I can never contemplate without the deepest admiration, her noble army of confessors and martyrs, and the illustrious train of her Divines, whose writings have been and continue to be the light of Christendom.[32]

5. The Christian Guardian further accused the Methodist ministers of introducing the administration of the sacraments to their people and the ordaining of themselves in order to serve

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28 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 142.
29 Loc. cit., and Vol. V, p. 472.
30 Watson, Works, Vol. V, p. 466.
31 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, pp. 142-43.
32 Watson, Works, Vol. V, p. 459.

their own interests.[33] Watson disputes the allegation in his reply to the Christian Guardian; and later, at greater length in his Theological Institutes, he defends the Methodist right to Presbyterian ordination. Concerning the accusation, Watson denies it on the ground that Wesley himself had acted on the principles involved and established the practice before his death, both by giving ordination and by allowing those whom he ordained to administer the sacraments in Scotland and the United States.[34] It was begun not to serve the interests of the preachers but those of the people;[35] for the preachers receive no extra remuneration for the administration of either the Lord's supper or baptism.[36] As if in answer to the question, "But by what authority other than Wesley do the Methodists presume to administer the sacraments?" he replies:

> What gives the Clergy their authority to administer the word of God and sacraments, but their ordination? What gives to Dissenting Ministers and those of the Church of Scotland their authority? Their ordination. What gives to Methodist Preachers their authority to administer? Their ordination. Ordination takes place in all these cases; that is, the separation of men from secular concerns, upon profession of a call from God the Holy Ghost, and after a good report from the churches, by the recognition of men already in the ministry.[37]

After having thus defined "ordination," Watson defends the principle acted upon by Methodism in four steps. First, he distinguishes between the offices of the early Christian Church.

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33 Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine, Vol. XVI, July, 1824, p. 274.
34 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, pp. 139-40.
35 Ibid., pp. 140-141.
36 Ibid., p. 146.
37 Ibid., p. 144.

That of Apostle was confined to those immediately commissioned by Christ to witness to his miracles and resurrection and to disclose the complete system of Christian doctrine and duty.[38] Whether the office of "prophet" be understood as denoting persons who foretold future events or extraordinary teachers who were raised up until the church was established under permanent instructors, in either case, it was temporary and passed away with other miraculous endowments of the first age of Christianity.[39] The Evangelists, such as Timothy and Titus, constituted another order of temporary officers whose function was to assist the Apostles.[40] The offices of "Pastor" and "Teacher" were distinguished by the fact that although all Pastors were Teachers, the reverse was not necessarily true since the term "Pastor" implies a function of government as well as of instruction.[41] The Deacons were those who had charge of the gifts and offerings for charitable purposes, but not in every instance; for Justin Martyr speaks of "chief Ministers" fulfilling that responsibility.[42] On the ground of the promiscuous use of the terms "Bishop" and "Presbyter" in the New Testament, Watson concludes that the same order of ministers is expressed by both.[43] He also equates "Presbyters" and "Elders." When Paul called the Elders, or Presbyters, of the Church at Ephesus to meet him in Miletus, he charged them as ἐπισκόπους , "overseers," to tend the flock

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38 Watson, Works, Vol. XII, p. 169.
39 Ibid., p. 170.
40 Loc. cit.
41 Loc. cit.
42 Loc. cit.
43 Ibid., p. 171.

and feed the church.[44] In this instance he affirms that the names are used interchangeably, as they are again where Paul commissioned Titus to ordain Elders and then added, "a Bishop must be blameless."[45] Furthermore, since only Bishops and Deacons are addressed in Philippians," if Presbyters were not understood to be included under the term 'Bishops,' the omission of any notice of this order of Ministers is not to be accounted for."[46] Watson does not object to Episcopacy as such, but to its assumption of a superior order, of an exclusive right to govern pastors as well as the people and to ordain into the Christian ministry.[47] He agrees that a distinction between the two arose early in the church but denies it to have been a distinction of order.[48] The second step of his argument, then, is that Bishops have no exclusive right to perform the act of Ordination.

Since the Apostles were ordained by Christ, the Evangelists by the Apostles, and the Elders by the Apostles and Evangelists, Watson concludes that the people themselves are not invested with the right to ordain.[49] Finally, the power of ordination is "vested in Ministers alone, to be exercised on their responsibility to Christ."[50] Thus, "all the regular Methodists have not only as legal an authority, but one as fully scriptural, as the Clergy of the Christian Guardian party, to discharge all the functions of Ministers of Christ to their societies and to the world."[51]

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44 Acts 20:17,28.
45 Titus 1:5-7.
46 Watson, Works, Vol. XII, p. 171.
47 Ibid., p. 179.
48 Ibid., p. 173.
49 Ibid., p. 191.
50 Ibid., p. 192.
51 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 146.

B. Defense of Wesleyan Methodism from Inner Strife.

Following the Conference of 1827 a major conflict disturbed the peace of the Methodist societies. Although Watson was not an active participant in the events related to its origin, he eventually entered the dispute by the publication of a pamphlet in December, 1828. The entire unhappy experience began when certain members of the Brunswick Chapel in Leeds desired an organ for the Chapel. According to a law of the Conference of 1820 with special reference to organs, for a Chapel to obtain one a request had first to be made to a District Meeting. Upon being granted the sanction of that body the request was then to be referred to the following Conference. Such a District Meeting was held prior to the Conference of 1827. In view of the fact that the members of the Chapel were not in agreement on the matter, the Meeting refused to give permission at that time for the erection of the organ. Some of those who wanted the instrument were dissatisfied with the action on the District level and appealed to the Conference. The Conference of 1827, in what now seems like a blunder, disregarded their own law requiring the sanction of the District Meeting and reversed the opinion of that body. The unrest which developed over the decision among the societies involved was heightened after Conference by the determination of the new Superintendent, Mr. Grindrod, not to interfere with a matter on which the Conference had given judgment.

A local preacher, Matthew Johnson, assumed the initiative in an agitation against the action and, in opposition to another Methodist law, called a meeting of the local preachers of the two Leeds Circuits. Johnson disregarded a warning from a brother minister and persisted until charges for convoking unauthorized assemblies were brought against him before the Local Preachers Meeting. Grindrod acted by suspending Johnson for three months. A number of preachers sympathized with Johnson, declaring that they too would remain silent. Since the matter was clearly getting out of hand, Grindrod exercised his authority by calling a Special District Meeting.

Provisions for such meetings had been outlined by the Conference of 1797.

> That no Chairman may have cause to complain of the want of power in cases which (according to his judgment) cannot be settled in the ordinary district meeting, he shall have authority to summon three of the nearest superintendents, to be incorporated with the district meeting, who shall have equal authority to vote and settle everything till the Conference.[1]

Blunder followed blunder. Grindrod invited not the three "nearest superintendents" but three beyond the limit prescribed by the law. He further invited the President of the Conference, who by virtue of his office had the right to attend. The President brought with him, however, an "official advisor" in the person of Jabez Bunting, who was that year Secretary of the Conference, but who had no legal sanction for being a part of the meeting. Of course, the meeting found the action of Johnson

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1 William Pierce, Ecclesiastical Principles and Polity of Wesleyan Methodists, p. 398, quoted from Conference Minutes, 1797, Vol. 1, p. 395.

to have been unauthorized, reprehensible, and the meetings called by him illegal.

Since the Special District Meeting had no legislative or administrative power, Johnson and those involved with him were left to the investigation and verdict of a Leaders' Meeting. When that meeting was held, however, no member was allowed to vote who had not first committed himself by document or speech to the opinion of the superintendent. The actions thus taken in the weeks following Conference did nothing to assuage the unrest but rather gave new cause for discontent. A number of people, among whom were members of the South London Circuit, objected to what they considered to be flagrant violations of the Conference laws and interference with the rights of the people.

When the Conference met in 1828, the matter had assumed far more serious proportions than in the preceding year. It was debated on the Conference floor. Watson spoke to the issue in a conciliatory speech, of which a résumé is given by Gregory in his Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism.

> Richard Watson, speaking from his own experience, questioned the wisdom of the Leeds ministers who had allowed themselves to be sucked into the vortex of agitation through the public press. Whilst he warmly recognized the ability of their defence of Methodism against Congregationalism, he condemned the depriving of the Leaders' Meeting of its guaranteed rights by forbidding voice or vote to every leader who would not either sign or vocally assent to a written document, which would have committed him beforehand to one particular side. He concluded by proposing that the permission to erect an organ in the Brunswick Chapel, Leeds, which was given by the Conference of 1827, should be suspended till the Conference of 1829, in order to allow time for a strenuous effort to bring the trustees' meeting on the one hand, and the leaders and local preachers on the other, into a

brotherly accommodation of the matter in dispute.[2] An address defending the people's rights which had previously been printed and circulated was presented to the Conference by a group from the South London Circuit, only to receive the censure of the Conference. The dissatisfied group later produced some resolutions which raised issues sufficiently significant to cause Watson to apply his pen to a defense of the Conference and an attempt to mollify the dissentients. He published "An Affectionate Address to the Trustees, Stewards, Local Preachers, and Leaders of the London South Circuit," which bears a date of December 29, 1828.[3] The fact that only five members were lost in South London because of the dispute, but more than a thousand in Leeds, has been attributed in measure to Watson's conciliatory efforts in conjunction with the policies pursued by the Trefferys, father and son, and James Dixon.[4]

The conflict was a painful and costly one for Methodism. When the Conference met in 1827, the membership of the two Leeds Circuits was 5,200; but by the time the conflagration began to subside in 1830, it was 4,500.[5] William Dawson picturesquely referred to the Leeds organ as "the great dragon, that made one mouthfull of a thousand Methodists and more."[6] It is worthy of note that the results of the dispute remained to a degree localized; for the total number of Methodists in Great Britian increased by 11,000 between 1827 and 1830. Against the

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2 Benjamin Gregory, Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism, pp. 58-59.
3 Richard Watson, Works, Vol. VII, pp. 87-129.
4 Gregory, op. cit., pp. 87-88.
5 T.P. Bunting, Life of Jabez Bunting, D.D., Vol. II, p. 239.
6 Gregory, op. cit., p. 95.

background as sketched an attempt is to be made to understand Watson's position on the issues to which he addressed himself and to evaluate his contribution.

The address of the South London Circuit had been printed in the form of a pamphlet bearing the title,"The People's Rights."[7] It was composed of two main sections preceded by a statement of their premises and followed by some concluding remarks on what they deemed to be fallacies in the reasoning of the Special District Meeting. In the first section they reviewed the laws of the Conference relative to Special District Meetings; and in the second they reviewed the proceedings of the Leeds meeting, objecting to the unconstitutionality of it, its claims to authority, and the conduct of it. They were convinced that the Special District Meeting had exhibited an "unwarrantable exercise of authority, which if once admitted, must effectually overturn everything worthy of the name of right or privilege on the part of the laity, and place our societies in a condition of abject subserviency to the Conference, and to its official agents."[8] They avowed their loyalty to Methodism and its system as it had long been established and denied that they were either reformers or radicals. The development of their case depended upon two points. In the first place, they maintained that the Special District Meeting had no authority in local matters and:

> --That <u>traveling preachers</u> alone are, by the present constitution of Methodism, amenable to special district meetings; and that the application of the

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7 "The Peoples Rights," London: John Kaye and Co., 1850.
8 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 1.

> judicial and inquisitorial powers of such meetings to officers and members of our societies, is a novel and unauthorised extension of their jurisdiction.[9]

In regard to the Rules of the Conference of 1797, they disclaim that these gave to Special District Meetings a power to interfere with local jurisdiction:

> --because the Conference possessed no such power or right; but, on the contrary, this very Conference of 1797 published to the world their acknowledgement of quarterly meetings, leaders' meetings, and local preachers' meetings; and declared that they had given up to them "the whole management of their temporal affairs," and "by far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority."[10]

Watson discerned a danger to the connexional nature of Methodism in the premises underlying the address; and, therefore, his Address to them accentuates three things: the connexional nature of Methodism and the "power" of the Conference, the jurisdiction of the Conference in relation to local meetings and local officers, and the jurisdiction of the Special District Meetings.

The religious body to which all Methodists belong, he reminds them, is a Connexion, "a number of societies who have agreed to unite themselves in a common bond of doctrine and discipline, under a common code of regulations and usages, and under a common government."[11] The societies are not independent churches; and by virtue of their union, each society is committed to submission to the influence and opinion of the whole. In a subsequent reply to Watson, it was pointed out that the

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9 "The People's Rights," p. 3.
10 Ibid., p. 8.
11 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 90.

societies were called a "connexion" because of the connexion with Wesley and not with each other.[12] After the death of Wesley the societies were similarly connected with the Conference, however; and, therefore, Watson's assertion stands. In either case they were still united "under a common government." That common government, Watson affirms, is vested in the Conference but is subject to regulations which restrain its exercise.[13]

What, then, is the power of the Conference? The sum of its power is nothing more than is vested in each minister,[14] namely: to preach and receive members into the societies, to exercise pastoral care, to separate the immoral from the flock, to perpetuate the ministry and appoint assistants, to maintain sound doctrine, and to excite the people to liberality in supporting the institutions.[15] The exercise of the power is subject to checks, as in the case that if a leaders' meeting declares a person to be unfit to be admitted into a society, the preacher cannot admit him.[16] Such checks were never meant to "make co-Pastors of men who are not Pastors; co-Ministers of. . .the Leaders, who never professed to be Ministers; and so invest them with the duties and power of an office which they disclaim."[17]

The Conference has another power, "a conventional power arising out of the voluntary association of the body

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12 "Reply to the Affectionate Address of the Rev. Richard Watson," p. 112.
13 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 92.
14 Ibid., p. 93.
15 Ibid., p. 93ff.
16 Ibid., p. 97, and Pierce, op. cit., p. 771.
17 Watson, op. cit., p. 98.

according to our form of church government."[18] By virtue of the connexion, the Conference is both the protection and court of final appeal to ministers and people alike. Should a minister or a part of a congregation deviate from the law or practice of Methodism, the offended parties would have the right to insist that the Conference interfere.[19]

Concerning the jurisdiction of the Conference, Watson affirms that it is conceded the right to interfere in local affairs by three passages from the Minutes of 1797. In the first place, the President of the Conference is specifically given the "right, when written to by any concerned, to visit any Circuit, and to inquire into their affairs with respect to Methodism, and, in union with the District Committee, redress any grievance."[20] As evidence that the rule was understood in the sense he attributes to it, Watson reminds the men of South London that in his year as President some of the men who were then taking part with them had summoned him to their assistance on the ground of that prerogative. Secondly, "the Conference recommends it to the Superintendents of the Circuits to invite, on all important occasions, the Chairman of their respective Districts to be present at their Quarterly Meetings."[21] Thus, a Chairman of a District, an outsider in regard to a local Circuit, is clearly given the right to "interfere officially by advice and influence" in local affairs.[22] Thirdly, he appeals to the section previously quoted

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18 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 98.
19 Ibid., p. 99.
20 Pierce, op. cit., p. 454 and Watson, op. cit., pp.105-106.
21.Pierce, op. cit., p. 385, quoting Minutes, Vol. I, p. 395.
22 Watson, op. cit., p. 107.

which empowers the Chairman, "in cases which cannot be settled in the ordinary District Meetings," "to summon three of the nearest superintendents, to be incorporated with the district committee, who shall have equal authority to vote, and settle everything till the Conference."[23]

The South London Address had also denied that the conference had any right to try local officers. Watson denies that any such case as they implied had occurred; for even in Leeds "no man was tried by the District Meeting, but by the Meeting to which, as Local Preacher or Leader, he belonged."[24] He then proceeds to distinguish between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" cases. Suppose, he suggests, that a local officer actually ought to be expelled; but because of neglect, or fear, or some other reason, the local society fails to bring action. The pious members of the society would have no other way of purging the offending officer; the conscientious minister would have no authority to act; the Conference would have no way of maintaining the purity of the societies.[25] Expedience, if no other reason, demands that the Conference be at liberty to interfere in extraordinary cases. At this point, it must be admitted that Watson is arguing into the very teeth of the rules of 1797, one of which declares:

> No person shall be appointed a leader or steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the leaders' meeting; the nomination to be from the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation in the

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23 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 106.
24 Ibid., p. 109.
25 Ibid., pp. 109-10.

leaders' meeting.[26]

In spite of the above rule, Watson exhibits again three other passages from the rules which he is sure convey to the Conference the right even to try local officers in extraordinary cases. The first is that which empowers the President to enter a Circuit upon request to "inquire into their affairs with reference to Methodism, and, in union with the district committee, redress any grievance." In his opinion the clause includes all evils which might arise, whether concerning a preacher or a local officer, whether the redress requires "persuasion, admonition, suspension, or expulsion."[27] The second is that which makes the Chairman of the district in conjunction with the committee "responsible to the Conference for the execution of the laws, as far as his district is concerned." In this instance, the Chairman is empowered to execute the laws, under any circumstance and in any local society, should they be disregarded.[28] The third is that in which the Chairman is allowed to invite three of the nearest superintendents to be incorporated with the Special District Meeting in order to "settle everything till Conference." The "everything," he affirms, gives such a meeting a blanket power to deal with any matter, if it should be necessary.[29]

The other premise upon which the men of South London based their objection to the organization and administration of the Special District Meeting at Leeds was that, in their interpretation of the rules, such a meeting had authority to deal

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26 Pierce, on. cit., p. 771.
27 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 113.
28 Loc. cit.
29 Ibid., p. 114.

only with the traveling preachers. Watson's argument for the extended power of the Conference and, particularly, his interpretation of the blanket clause in relation to the Special District Meeting as quoted above, sufficiently refutes such an idea in his opinion. His discussion of the South London case, however, illustrates an interesting quirk in his method of argumentation. It appears from the evidence that Watson is not entirely adverse to slightly bending the truth or closing his eyes if such action aids his cause.

In regard to their position the South London Address had quoted these words from the Minutes of 1797, "Our District Committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining." Watson announces that this had been quoted in no creditable manner, and continues:

> The "authority spoken of is not the authority of the Districts in matters of discipline; for the same Minutes make the Districts responsible for "the execution of the laws;" but it is. . . their authority in financial matters, and in them only; for the words of the Conference, if your agent had fully quoted them, are, "Our District Committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining, but a bare negative in general:". . .But the Conference had already explained its meaning in the preceding pages, when, summing up the concessions made, they say, "The whole management of our temporal concerns may now truly be said to be invested in the Quarterly Meetings; the District Meetings have nothing left them but a negative."[30]

He, therefore, creates the impression that the quotation used in the Address was perverted and calculated to deceive. Watson himself, however, appears to have perpetrated a similar calumny. The section of the Minutes in question actually begins, "Thus,

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30 Watson, Works, Vol. VII, p. 119.

Brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands, as represented in your different public meetings."[31] There follow six areas in which concessions had been made, including: the management of yearly collections, management of temporal concerns, checks on the superintendents regarding the admission of members to the societies, checks regarding expulsion, necessity of consent by the local meeting before an officer is received or appointed, regulations concerning new rules. The second of these concessions is the quotation Watson refers to as the "meaning in the preceding pages." Following the list is a paragraph again confirming the concessions to the people and containing the sentence quoted in the Address, which obviously refers to the entire preceding section. Watson obviously alters the intention of the quotation in applying it only to the second concession when it is placed in a position to refer to all six.

To what extent was Watson's pamphlet effective? In the opinion of the biographer of James Dixon, it had a great share in preventing a numerous secession from Wesleyan Methodism.[32] Perhaps the best commentary on the acceptance of his views may be perceived in his appointment for the year 1829. Gregory admits that the controversy had caused so much dissension within the London North Circuit (City Road) and caused the congregations there so to dwindle that it became a matter of anxious consideration to the Conference.[33] An appreciation of Watson's position

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31 Pierce, op. cit., p. 772.
32 R. W. Dixon, The Life of James Dixon, p. 167.
33 Gregory, op. cit., p. 79.

and his pacific policy in the matter doubtless influenced his appointment to City Road in 1829.

Not everyone accepted his views with approbation, however. A lengthy reply to his pamphlet was issued charging primarily and rightfully that he had failed to deal with the question which first prompted the South London Address, namely, the facts of the Leeds case,[34] the composition of the Special District Meeting, the unauthorized presence of Bunting, and the action of the body.

> Never was a case made out against public men more unanswerable; never was there exhibited on the part of Christian ministers an abuse of discipline less justifiable. In proof of this, Sir, is your silence! You have not a word to say in defence of your brethren, on a single point raised and discussed in Part II of the London South Address![35]

Watson does not try to justify the particulars of the case. Indeed, he had already expressed his disapproval of the intimidation of the leaders' meeting. He attempts to establish the principle of the ultimate jurisdiction and power of the Conference in local matters. As an effort to defend and maintain Methodism's connexional nature, his contribution is to be appreciated. The extended jurisdiction of the Special District Meeting which he defended became later more explicitly stated in Methodist law.[36] On the matter of the powers of the Conference, however, his reasoning is subject to questioning.

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34 "Reply to the Affectionate Address of the Rev. Richard Watson." pp. 114-115.

35 Ibid., pp. 28-29.

36 Pierce, op. cit., p. 398.

His argument is built in three stages. First, he distinguishes between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" cases. Such a distinction, however, must always involve ambiguity and a matter of personal opinion. The laws of the societies relating to the various rights and duties of the laity, the extent and jurisdiction of the local meetings, are operative in all "ordinary" cases. In the second stage, all "extraordinary" cases are covered by the two blanket clauses: one giving the Special District Meeting the right to "settle everything till Conference," and the other charging the District Chairman with the responsibility of upholding all laws in his District. Ultimately, this might be interpreted in such a way as to make void the protections given to the people by virtue of the jurisdiction of their local meetings. It might mean the disregard for normal procedure and laws in "extraordinary" cases and the investing of the Chairman and the Special District Meeting with unbridled power. The third stage simply assumes that once an "extraordinary" case is out of local hands, the Chairman and the Special District Meeting are agents of the Conference. Watson, then, discovers the operation of two sets of rules for "ordinary" and "extraordinary" cases. However expedient such a distinction may have been in the matter he was defending, it is one which bore a seed of danger for the peace and consistent operation of a body.

CONCLUSION

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In making an effort to evaluate the importance of Richard Watson for Methodism the student is confronted with three questions: 1. What was his place in the general progress of Methodism? 2. Why has he been so largely forgotten today? and 3. What were his contributions for which he deserves a permanent remembrance? The concluding pages of this study contain an attempt to answer these questions.

What was Richard Watson's place in the general progress of the movement called Methodism? In order to answer this question one must first establish the pattern of the progress of Methodism. To perceive such a pattern demands a certain degree of abstraction and comparison. In a sense, the progress of Methodism may be compared with the early progress of Christianity itself. The stages of development in both may be applied to any movement, religious or secular, which has maintained its living unity and integrity as an influence on mankind.

A movement is begun when a dynamic force incapable of being bound by, or refused admission to, existing categories and institutions is introduced into a given situation in answer to some need. Immediately following its inception the force, be it an idea or a way of life, is subjected to the test of human experience. At some point during this stage it may begin to evolve as a definite movement. Throughout the first stage

the dynamic force may be embodied in the life of an individual or a group of individuals. If the movement is to have an objective life of its own beyond the lives of its inceptors, it must become embodied in another form. Thus, from the early days of Christianity an institutionalized unity began to evolve with its center in the Church at Rome. The embodying of the movement in an institution may be called the second stage although no definite line can be drawn between what is referred to here as stages. This second stage is necessary if the dynamic force is to remain alive as an influence, but it is accompanied by definite liabilities. For instance, in the process of preserving the force by institutionalizing it, rules and bounds are placed upon it, so that the movement which had its origin in the fact that it transcended existing bounds takes to itself a new set of limitations. These stages are seen in the first four centuries of Christian history. An analogy, it is true, which cannot be taken too literally, is implied in the first three books of the Old Testament representing as they do the beginnings, trials, and codification of early Judaism.

How are the above remarks applicable to Watson and Methodism? What is Watson's significance in the process described? Methodism had its genesis in the spiritual truths experienced by John and Charles Wesley and George Whitfield. Through the agency of their preaching others experienced as they did by faith the sense of God's forgiveness and acceptance. Thus, these men and their followers became the channel by which the dynamic force of the Holy Spirit performed his work in not a new but in a renewed way in the hearts of men. Was the

movement to be contained within the institution of the Church of England or was it to have an objective life of its own? Wesley gave it the foundations of an organization but denied that it was a body apart from the Anglican Church. As long as he lived John Wesley provided in his own person its motivating and unifying force. At his death Methodism was faced with the alternatives of either embodying its truth in a new institution or losing its unity as a force. The latter alternative was the path taken by the Calvinistic Methodists who had adhered to Whitfield during his lifetime. The former course was taken by the Wesleyan Methodists, although not without dissension among their own numbers. Wesleyan Methodism thereby entered the second stage, a stage of institutionalization, of consolidation, and, to no small degree, of crystalization and rigidity. No fact better illustrates the emergence of this second stage than the expulsion of the Primitive Methodists from the Wesleyan communion in 1807.

In the second stage of Methodism the name of one man, Jabez Bunting, stands out above all others for good or ill because of his labors in establishing the form and character of Methodism, the institution. Because of his administrative abilities and the length of his influence which extended through some fifty years, Bunting is the most remembered man of the period. If the significance of an individual is to be discerned from the significance of his contribution, then Richard Watson deserves a place as one of the two outstanding Methodists of this period. Watson performed for Methodist theology of the second stage the same task achieved by Bunting for its consti-

tution. He organized Methodist theology, giving it system, form, and direction. On being viewed in this light Watson is seen in his proper perspective.

How well did Watson do his work? If the opinions of his contemporaries, so often quoted in this study, constitute a basis of judgment, it must be admitted that his contribution was greatly appreciated. It is of significance that following the death of Watson the Conference placed a higher value, financial and otherwise, on the copyrights to his works than on those of Adam Clarke. After affirming the esteem bestowed upon Watson by his contemporaries the student of his life today is confronted with a fact, a fact in no small degree disconcerting but none the less a fact. One hundred and twenty-two years after Watson's death he is very largely a forgotten man. It is true his name is periodically resurrected for a half page or less by the scholars of Methodist history; but by and large, even his modern brethren of the ministry are oblivious of his life and influence. One is tempted to attribute this to the overshadowing prominence of the more controversial figure of Bunting. Such an answer, however, is far too simple. Why, then, has Watson been forgotten?

When the above question is applied to Watson's thought, at least three possible answers present themselves. The first involves the nature of his own theological quest and the direction of his theological gaze consequent upon his methods. One is reminded that his first theological interests as a lad resulted in his attending a Methodist chapel for the express purpose of acquiring arguments to use against an annoying Calvinist. In a sense this motivation dominated his theological development.

Of course, everyone brings his preconceived basic attitudes to a task involving thought, but Watson never passed beyond the stage of regarding theology as a means of marshalling arguments in defense of his own particular point of view to the discomfiture of opposing opinions. This is confirmed in all five of his uses of reason in the service of theologians, which have been previously presented in the section of this study dealing with the uses of reason. Because of this bias, his Theological Institutes is primarily a dictionary of arguments for and against certain theological propositions. The very nature of the Institutes, therefore, undoubtedly made it a valuable tool in the hands of ministers in his own day; but it had the disadvantages of dating the work and failing to establish a cogent and much needed theological foundation upon which Methodism as an institution distinct from the Church of England might build.

If Watson's method gave his work a superficial timeliness, it also led him into paths which proved intellectually abortive. His preoccupation with arguments induced him to concentrate his thought on major fields involving controversies, such as Deism, Socinianism, and Calvinism. For both the subjects of his interest and his arguments Watson turned his eyes to the past. Although he culled the best arguments from the past, unfortunately the issues he chose to debate were dead or dying as objects of his style of treatment. For instance, when Deism which had lain dormant for forty years enjoyed a revival with the publication of Paine's works in the last decade of the eighteenth century, the cries of "infidels" and the worn out arguments of the first half of the century were of no avail against

it; yet Watson reproduced the opinions of Leslie's Short and Easy Method with the Deists for the guidance of his readers. Watson neither understood nor took into consideration the new forces surging through the life and thought of Britain in his day, forces heralded by Methodism itself and brought into expression by Burns, Cowper, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

John Wesley was a great religious leader, a practical man, and a saintly man, but he was not in the strictest sense a theologian. Methodism in this second stage, therefore, stood in need of having the religious truths accented by him interpreted and oriented within their own philosophical and theological framework. Methodism needed a Paul not a Judaiser. It was in a measure because of Watson's method that he failed to fulfill this need. Because, therefore, he offered Methodism no sure foundation upon which to build, his work was soon forgotten.

A second reason for the brief remembrance accorded to Watson's religious thought is similar to the first but may be stated separately. His work fell stillborn from his pen because philosophy and theology had already passed into a new phase at the time of his writing. At the heart of his theology was a distrust of reason in the dilemma of reason versus revelation. This was his answer to the "natural theology" of the eighteenth century. Even as he wrote, however, the impasse imposed by the dilemma had been superseded by Kant's distinction between pure and practical reason. It is interesting to note that the year of Watson's birth, 1781, was also the year of the publication of Kant's Kritik der Reinen Vernunft and marks the beginning of the new era. Unfortunately the significance of the new flow of

German thought was slow in reaching England. Coleridge in his Aids to Reflection, which was published in 1825, was one of the first to appreciate the new trends. Thus, although Watson chronologically succeeded Kant, his theology belongs to the period preceding the German influence on English thought. For this reason Watson's theology, to many alert and sensitive minds, was obsolete before it was written.

A third, and perhaps the most important reason why Watson's religious thought is now so largely forgotten by those of his own communion is that he unwittingly diverted the stream of Wesleyan theology from its true course. The pattern of Wesley's theology may be indicated briefly by three words: LOVE - FAITH - LOVE. Its origin is the love of God in Jesus Christ; its end, a human life of love and holiness. At the center is a sinful individual's experience of faith in Christ, whereby the love of God is appropriated to him in forgiveness and adoption, and from which flows a life of holiness grounded on the motive of love. Wesley had an essential humanity which never allowed him to lose sight of the individual human being in his need and in his experience of faith. The individual faith-experience was the beginning of one's deepest knowledge of God and was the best evidence or proof of the truth of Christianity. In a letter addressed to Dr. Conyers Middleton in reply to his A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church, after speaking of faith Wesley says:

> And Christianity, considered as an inward principle, is the completion of all those promises. It is holiness and happiness, the image of God

> impressed on a created spirit, a fountain of peace and love springing up into everlasting life.
>
> And this I conceive to be the strongest evidence of the truth of Christianity. I do not undervalue traditional evidence. Let it have its place and its due honour. It is highly serviceable in its kind and in its degree. And yet I cannot set it on a level with this.
>
> . . .
>
> The inward evidence is intimately present to all persons at all times and in all places. It is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ. "This," then, "is the record," this is the evidence, emphatically so called, "that God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in His Son."[1]

Now it would seem on the surface that Watson gave to faith an equally prominent position, as is indicated by his depreciation of reason in discerning the things of religion. Actually, instead of building his theology on faith as a reciprocal experience between God through Christ and man, he builds on faith in its meaning of assent. The result is that for the intellectual content of his discussions on God and the validity of Christianity he relies on the traditional evidences. The perversion by this course of the true Wesleyan theology is indicated by the fact that in his catalogue of the attributes of God that of love is afforded no place at all. Watson, therefore, in failing to expand the implications of Wesley's thought succeeded in binding Methodist theology to thought forms and expressions which were dying.

The one major objection which might have caused Watson's other activities to be minimized with the passing of time is related to his failure to realize the significance of the human-

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1 John Wesley, Letters, Vol. II, pp. 383-84.

divine relationship in the faith-experience. One of the characteristics of John Wesley was his abiding concern for people, their problems and their needs. This is seen time and again in his theology, his ministry, his letters, and the acts which alienated him in principle from his Church. To say whether his natural compassion helped fashion his theology or vice versa is impossible. This much is certain; John Wesley never lost sight of the individual human being. Watson's work seems to have been dominated more by a concern for ideas than for individuals. This helps to explain his comparative lack of success as a minister while at the same time being highly acclaimed as a preacher.

One must confront a final question. What were Watson's contributions which warrant his being remembered today? In a sense this whole study has been an attempt to answer this question. At the close of each of the chapters dealing with his various activities and the selected facets of his thought an effort has been made to evaluate his particular contributions. In the light of these evaluations the following remarks are simply a statement of the most significant and lasting aspects of his work. In the area of thought, although he did not pursue the distinctive line implied by Wesley, he gave to Methodism, particularly in his Institutes, in its second stage a unified intellectual foundation adequate to its current needs, one which retained its place in the training of the Methodist ministry for more than a generation. In the area of his activities, he should be remembered for his leadership in the two major creative movements in which Methodism participated during his ministry. He shares with Bunting a place of highest importance in the

development of Methodist Missions in the crucial period from the organization of the first District Missionary Society in 1813 until his death. He more than any other one man was responsible for the support by Methodism of the movement which culminated in the abolition of slavery in British possessions in 1833, a support the importance of which has already been discussed. For these reasons, if for no other, Watson deserves an established place of remembrance.

Aside from questions of contributions, importance, and remembrance Watson's influence will never cease to be felt. While he was yet a young man, God touched his life and gave him a mission to perform. For nearly forty years Watson kept the faith in his life and passed it on through his service to the will of God. No greater thing can be said of any man.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A[1]

SERMON I

Genesis 6:3 "And the Lord said, 'My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.'"

Punishment of Adam did not deter his posterity from sinning -- through Adam became mortal -- and death entered the world -- ground cursed -- and all doomed to labor, yet vice prevailed and corruption and violence filled the earth and even the race of Seth, which constituted the church of God did not preserve itself. Though called the Sons of God, as being in covenant with him, and his worshippers, yet they did not maintain their character. Among other instances of their yielding to the prevailing corruption, one is recorded in the preceding verses. They intermarried with the descendants of Cain and by this means the whole antediluvian Church of God became so corrupted, that Noah and his family only were found righteous in the sight of God.

In these circumstances Almighty God, the lover of justice and purity offended with the crimes of men -- with the unchecked corruption of morals, and especially with that violence and oppression of which the earth was full -- repented that he had made man -- nay it grieved him at his heart. Some say this is spoken, in condescending tones, after the manner of man -- I think not, I think that it is spoken after the manner of God, that the emotions there ascribed to the Divine Nature are true emotions, but divine not human, that God can both repent and grieve, for he hath said it; but that it is in a manner which we cannot comprehend because we cannot comprehend God. He resolved therefore upon an awful demonstration of his justice and hatred to sin, such as might strike all succeeding ages with dread, and be a public and everlasting monument

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1 The following sermons by Watson were discovered among the papers in the archives of the Methodist Book Room. The co-operation of Mr. J. H. Martin, the archivist, has made possible their inclusion, along with that of Watson's Anti-Slavery Address in Appendix C, in this present study. All the sermons here produced, except the one on John 3:16, were in Watson's handwriting. Those on Genesis 6:3, I Kings 8: 57-60, and Luke 21:33 have not been previously published. The other two have appeared in his works in slightly varying forms: the one on Micah 5: 2-4 in his Works, Vol. VIII, p. 526ff; the one on John 3: 16 in the same volume, p. 428ff.

of the danger of persevering in iniquity -- he resolved to destroy the whole race of men one family alone excepted.

O Terrible resolve! Who sees not in this, that however kind and merciful, yet that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Yet even here was mercy, that all the world might know that he is just when he judges. My Spirit shall not always strive with man -- he strives with him now -- he shall not always strive; he might in strict justice even now be withdrawn, yet he shall strive with man one hundred and twenty years longer the flood shall be so long delayed, and man shall have that space to repent --

To this subject your attention is now directed. It is an ancient transaction, but it is recorded for our learning, and as the principles of God's moral Government remain the same in all ages, we are interested in it and the text is monitory and instructive to us. --

I. The first particular in the text which strikes the attention is, the description of man as a corrupt and guilty creature. "He is flesh." This was that term in the Antediluvian Theology which designated the wicked and worldly -- and it runs through every dispensation, it is the language of the New Testament as well as the Old. "The carnal fleshly mind is enmity to God" and they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

No term could more accurately describe the natural unregenerate State of man. Before the fall the body was in subjection to the Spirit. To this divine grace raises man again, so that he walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit -- but when this change has not taken place, the soul is under the dominion of the animal nature, man is in the flesh and cannot please God. The immediate question before us, is, how far does this apply? Who are included in this sad charge?

1. All sensual men -- This I need not stay to prove -- All epicureans, whose principal enquiry and care is what shall we eat and what shall we drink -- the language of whose conduct, if not of their creed is let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die -- all whoremongers and adulterers whom God hath so expressly declared he will judge. But we turn from the head of gross and sensual men, and observe.

2. That to be flesh, comprehends the whole body of worldly men however respectable in character and decent in morals -- Flesh is opposed to Spirit -- carnal to spiritual -- now for what end and purpose do they live -- to buy, to sell, and to get gain -- to gratify "the lust of the eye," by appearances, "the lust of the flesh" by indulgences luxurious if not immoral, and "the pride of life," by that elevation of circumstances after which they aspire. Now here is nothing spiritual. This is living to the flesh -- no preparation for heaven, and no laying up treasure there. So rich man in the gospel -- No gross immorality charged -- his lands brought forth plentifully -- full of worldly cares -- Death arrested him -- stripped of the world -- and not rich toward God -- he left earth, and he found no inheritance in heaven --

3. In this description, we must also include the votaries of what are called refined pleasures. Not any

great proportion of these content themselves with refined modes of sinning; but even if they did they are by a Scriptural decision in the flesh -- for if we have not middle state between the carnal and the spiritual -- then unless these pleasures spring from spiritual habits and tend to spiritual ends, all their votaries are in the flesh. Now will this be pretended, that the theatre, the card table, that jocose society and all the other manners of pleasure which are comprehended in the general term amusements, are at all spiritual in their tending. Do they lead you to God? -- do they dispose you to prayer? do they fit you for works of charity and piety? Put them in their best aspect and call them recreations -- we allow the lawfulness of recreations; but none are lawful which do not recreate, that is renew the strength and spirits and tastes of man for the serious duties of life among which surely the duties of religion are the most serious, and the most pressing. You know they do not, that the effect is precisely opposite, and that nothing is so dull, tasteless, and even offensive to the lovers of pleasure as the word, the worship, and the work of God. You then with all your refinements are fleshly and carnal.

What is the conclusion of this ruin? I beseech you think of it. They in the flesh cannot please God. You are always displeasing him -- every word, thought, action is vitiated -- and to be carnally minded is death. It infallibly leads to it, for life and peace are to the spiritually minded only.

II. But though man is fleshly, fallen, corrupt, and worldly, yet, God by his Spirit strives with him. Word rendered strives, signifies to struggle, debate and kindly, and for the good of the party to contend the matter with him. This was the benevolent office of the Spirit in the earliest ages, and this is his office to the present time.

At so early a period do we have the great doctrine of the Trinity and the relation of each to the work of our redemption manifested. We have God the Judge. We have God also God the Redeemer who was made flesh in the seed of the woman, and in the anticipation of whose Incarnation, and the bruising of his heel by suffering, this God the Judge is longsuffering and merciful -- and God the Spirit whose delightful work in all ages it has been to carry the Redeeming plan into effect in the hearts of individuals. In what manner then does he strive, kindly contend and debate so with men, in order to their salvation? --

1. By his co-operation with even outward things -- He makes all sin a source of misery and all pleasures of sin unsatisfying. Who can account for these facts? This is the Law he has stamped upon them. For near 2,000 years, men have been trying the experiment but in vain. He restrains men by circumstances by labour and poverty so that they cannot do the evil they would, and thus the inward fight and rage commences which constitutes one of the miseries of sinful state --

He disappoints and afflicts. So all these things work with him -- God often strives with man. See in this the good and kind hand of your God --

2. The Spirit is the author of the Revelation

in all ages -- and of the whole inspired volume -- By this he strives, debates, contends -- The publication of the holy Law, the record of terrible judgments the exhortations, the reproofs the exalted Christians -- the history of the Law of God in Christ -- all these things keep up the standard -- call conscience into exercise -- keep God before man as a Judge -- and as a Father often still more troublesome to the man going on in his trespasses -- The effect of this is apparent -- sin is the source of greater shame and misery when this word is known -- hard to kick against the pricks -- all show it by their careful shunning of the word, read it not, hear it not faithfully explained --Some by their malignant enmity, show that there is that in it which debates and contends with them and will not suffer them to go on in their trespasses without check -- O happy they who suffer the word even to slay them that they may live --

3. By his Ministers -- Work of the Holy Spirit to raise them up and send them, Enoch prophesied of Judgment, Noah debated the matter with the men of his day one hundred and twenty years -- Isaiah rests polished eloquence, Jeremiah with tears, Ezekiel by reproaches -- Last of all his Son -- See how he debated the matter with all the tenderness of love.

SERMON II

I Kings 8: 57-60 "The Lord our God be with us as he was with our Fathers, let him not leave us nor forsake us - that he may incline our hearts unto him to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes and his judgments which he commanded our fathers - And let these my words wherewith I have made supplication before the Lord be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel, at all times that the matter shall require, that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and there is none else --"

Many many interesting circumstances attended the building of (the) temple of Solomon. These will appear to be peculiarly impressive.

David not allowed to build -- man of blood -- was unlawful -- yet this work to be associated with no ideas of judgment -- out of pure and most affecting mercy, that God will permit us to worship -- and be near to listen to the voice of man -

That universality and unanimity of co-operation -- David and Solomon both affected by it -- was a pleasing sight -- scarcely any such act of national piety on record -- yet what a comment on human nature -- Even Solomon became a worshipper of Ashtoroth and Baal, and this whole people sunk into bare and abject idolatry -- Let him that thinketh he standeth -- remember not outward circumstances however favorable can keep us -- present as feats of piety no safeguard -- watch ye and pray always -- collective piety sum of individual --

The abasement and even annihilation of man before God

This was the first ever built by any of his true worshippers to him -- Noah had built an altar -- Jacob had annointed a stone Moses had erected a tent of boards -- this the first -- and most splendid and costly -- but no boasting -- all, as it ought who adoring wonder that God should accept any work for -- What am I and what is my people says David who made the preparations -- and Solomon when all was complete will --
God in Song and behold heaven and the heaven of heavens etc.- - The very object of its erection was enough to impress humility upon man -- it was a house of prayer, prayer for pardon, for help -- there man is a criminal so he needs pardon, and corrupt.

Brethren let us not forget this -- the feeling I wish to impress upon you is, that of dependance -- this is a house of prayer, and your business here is prayer -- your case renders large prayers necessary and God is near you to fulfill your longest requests -- The words of Soloman now read as the text we use to guide our petitions, and there is not one; but is not only as appropriate, but more appropriate to Christians than to Jews --

To the points of this important prayer then, in

succession, I call your attention. We are taught to pray --

I. That God may be with us --

II. That he may be with us, as with our fathers

III. That practical piety may be perpetuated among us -- that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in his ways

IV. That our supplication before him to maintain our cause and the cause of his people may be nigh unto him day and night -- and let these my words etc.

V. That God's especial concern to us may be instructive and salutary to the whole world -- that other people

I. That the Lord our God may be with us -- Sentiment of Solomon -- that all he had done nothing without this -- the sentiment just, and it was honoured of God -- what he sought he found -- he with us as with our fathers, and at this prayer God came down as he had done to their fathers, and filled the house with his glory.

Remember then that your work this day, and all your works are vain unless God be with you, unless he come to you, and remain with you -- But you ask, can we expect a special manifestation of God, like Solomon? not like his but much more glorious. However glorious Old Dispensation the new excells in glory; and the distinction nowhere marked more strongly than in the manifestations of God -- Did God appear to our convicted first parents at once to pronounce their sentence and to give hopes of pardon -- God manifest in the flesh has not intimated to us an obscure avenue of escape, but thrown open wide and refulgent the new and living way, and showed how mercy and truth meet together.

Did Moses see the glory of God tempered by interposing and encircling clouds, we have seen it beaming now mildly and yet more effulgently from the face of Jesus Christ -- that countenance of divine dignity, of weeping sympathies and winning love.

Did the pious pair of Israel converse with the angel whose name was secret, wonderful, and see him after he had done wondrously ascend in the flame of their humble altar, we have seen the wonders of the life, death and resurrection of the same mighty being whose name is secret, and seen him ascend to heaven -- in the flame of his own sacrifice --

Did Ezekiel see among the wheels the emblems of providential rule, the figure of a <u>hand of a man</u>, an indication of the subjection of this world's dominions to God. We have seen not the hand of the man, but the man Christ Jesus himself and heard him say to our comfort "all power is given to me etc."

So likewise the descent and dwelling of God in the tabernacle and the temple glorious as they were but the twilight radiating which preceding that act of spiritual manifestation, reserved for a higher despensation -- the descent of God took place in wind and falling fires of Pentecost, and God's inhabitation of the Churches that of the Holy Ghost for ever. So much more glorious and efficient was this than the visitations of Sinai and Sion, that our Lord represents it as more so than his own personal presence with his disciples, dear to them as that was, it is expedient that I go away for if I go

not the Comforter, etc. From that hour, God has been more eminently and vitally "God with us"-- than in any age, and is now always at hand to manifest himself to us. When we then pray that the Lord our God may be with us, what is that when interpreted in the full import of the Gospel.

God is with us as the fountain of life --
as God reconciling us by pardon
as God our restorer
in special manifestation as God our all

Such he is to individuals; but how is he God with us, collectively in such a house as this, in such services as these. That he should be with us we have seen is indispensible, for if not here in you have built and in vain you assemble.

The word may be preached -- but it will be but a display of doctrine -- eloquence may be poured forth; but its subject will not render it saving -- if God be not here an oration by Cicero would move some as effectively. Feeling both in the preacher, and the people may be excited; but it will be mere sentiment, an animal emotion, a physical impulse from the imagination

You may have services, but a body of forms, simple or complicated it matters not

Prayer will be offered but it will be but a bodily exercise -- no hearts of stone will become hearts of flesh, no mournful spirits will break with joy, no weary and heavy laden find rest --

Such is the result of being without God not in the world only; but what is worse without God in the church.

But if God be with you, how will the picture be reversed?

God will be with you in the word -- its pages shine with light, and burn with influence quick and powerful

With you in your preachers -- In them he will fulfill those wondrous words -- I will be to you a mouth -- and a vision-- God who made the mouth will be with their mouth -- taught of God they shall teach you, and feeling what St. Paul calls the mighty working of God in me, he will work by them in you --

Your feeling shall not be sentiment but conscience, your services not body but spirit, your prayers if they go forth weeping, shall come again rejoicing etc. Here the dead shall hear the voice and live -- here you and your families to be trained up for heaven -- forget not that all this nothing without God. Bid him come to you, the Lord our God be with us, forsake us not again, thou and the ark of thy strength --

II. We are taught by our text to pray that God would be with us as with our fathers

Solomon had an illustrious ancestry though there was but one king in its line -- his people shared this honour with him; there was an emphatic way in which they could speak of their fathers -- and yet their heraldry was peculiar. It was not that they had at that time to speak of their princes, their heroes, and their statesmen, the limits of their country, and their partial relations to other states, kept all there on comparatively a small scale of exhibition; the elders approved their good reports, their fame, through faith; it was the glory of their descendents to joy our fathers trusted in this and were not

confounded -- The rank which their heraldic bearings indicated, that they were the people whom God had chosen for his inheritance and its most illustrious allusions were to events which no other nation could register in its history, events effected by the right hand and the outstretched hand of God. Such is the ancestry of all true Christians, ancestry drawn through a long line of moral glory -- Every man who has faith a child of Abraham he comes by his confession into a new family, which are born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh; but of God. The loftiest noble, the highest monarch, if born again from heaven might spurn the genealogy of nature, for by that change in his soul he would go into the family of God, and claim among his ancestors, men whom God himself admitted to his counsels, and made the instruments of his dispensations to man kind -- This line of our spiritual ancestors is indeed so long, so lofty in the characters it exhibits, and in so eminent a sense was God <u>with</u> <u>them</u> that it is not perhaps without some hesitancy, a trembling anxiety lest we should be presuming too much to ask that God should be with us, as he was with them -- We know too, that a common notion prevails that those who stand out in this line with peculiar prominency as fathers, fathers of the patriarchal church fathers of Jewish and Christian churches -- fathers of the reformation, fathers of the respected churches and societies into which the reformation has been carried, men under a dispensation so special, that not only their gifts but their graces were peculiar to them -- and that their descendants would in vain expect that God should be with them, as with their fathers --

And indeed we grant that God was eminently with them and that the grace of God in them was exceeding abundant -- That Enoch walked with God -- that Abraham exhibited all loftiness of faith -- that the time would fail to tell how God was with the "goodly fellowship of the prophets," the glorious company of the Apostles; the noble army of martyrs; the venerable reformers of modern Christendom; and those distinguished men the instruments and first fruits of the last great revival of religion in our own country -- many of the latter are especially fresh to your recollection, and you know how God was with them --

What decided conversions; how full the surrender of their souls to Christ -- what deadness to the world -- what care for souls -- what patience of reproach and shame -- what attention to the religion of the heart; -- what a subordinating of all things to one thing only, living to glorify God -- what generous sacrifices made they for others, what hallowed converse among themselves; with what a power did truth and love invest them, so that the people fell under them -- and what deaths of peace and glory crowned the whole.

Are we to be this, or must we by some law, which restricts this eminence of holiness to some former ages, must we necessarily be less than this? If anyone affirms this we ask for his proofs, veritable proofs from holy writ, and we boldly say, he cannot find them there; and the theory itself supposes so many absurdities that it is its own refutation.

It supposes that when extraordinary gifts of the Spirit

are withdrawn, and extraordinary men are no more, that the vital current of divine influence narrows up its banks, and shallower in its depth -- but neither extraordinary gifts, nor extraordinary men ever directly converted or edified a soul, -- they attracted attention, they led men to the vital current, but it was opened from a higher source, and flowed on independent of them --

This theory of necessary decay supposes too that characters of internal piety are lowered, and that even the practice has a lower strand, but then to prove this they must show us a new revelation God gives less help, they must show he requires less. But thank God they have no Bible to show which tells that since the days of our fathers are fled, our faith is to be mixed with doubt; our ardour lowered by coldness, our communion with God to be weak and interrupted, our hatred of evil less complete, and our holiness less exact and exalted -- the promises are as rich, and the precepts shine with a beauty of holiness as beaming as when first pronounced by the lips of our Lord and his Apostles. It supposes also with respect to this that a less intense action upon the world which lies in wickedness will save it -- But the fact refutes it -- it has been tried -- Men did decay, and the church itself became dark -- Now did you ever see religion spread but in the hands of men who aimed themselves, and led others to aim at nothing less than the religion of the scriptures -- Truly it has been said, The Bible, the Bible only is the standard of our experimental and practical religion -- brand ye your fathers, and call them enthusiasts and fanatics who are like them -- ye hypocrites, ye build the sepulcher of the prophets and stone the men who have the same commission and preach the same doctrine -- Beloved fall not into this error in any degree -- aim to be in heart and life like the best men the Church has presented -- whose faith follow, and adoring the grace of God in them; say this day, the Lord be with us, as he was with our fathers, let him not leave us nor forsake us --

III. Another part of this prayer is the perpetuation of practical piety -- that he may incline our hearts etc.

Not necessary here to enter into a critical distinction between the terms ways, commandments, statutes and judgments, they express that entire regard to all which the Lord hath enjoined upon a people, calling themselves his people, and in covenant with him to obey him in all things -- and the whole may be compressed in our steady and persevering regard to doctrine - to worship - and to moral practice --

1. Doctrine -- To pray that our hearts may be inclined by God to preserve his doctrines pure is no unimportant part of the solemnity of a day like this -- for we have but to look around us to see the effect upon the Churches by its corruption -- What has humbled, and despaired the seed of Abram, but a corruption of doctrine as to Messiah -- What has made the superstition of the church of Rome spoken of like her faith formerly throughout the whole world; but a series of subtle and of gross corruptions; what has been the bane of so many of the churches of the Reformation -- philosophy and vain deceit after the rudiments of the world, not after Christ.

A notion has been advocated by deceiving and subtle men, that the great fault of the churches has been to attend man more to doctrinal distinctions than to practice, and this I fear sometimes with a view rather to abate our regard for the leading truths of the New Testament, than any great tenderness for practical piety -- and no attempt has ever been made by any church, by any creed, by any writer, to guard on scriptural grounds against the evasions and the invasions of error, but is entitled to our gratitude -- In fact all right practice is built on right experience, and all right experience upon doctrinal truth, and the one cannot consist without the other. Suffer me briefly to confirm this -- Take doctrine of Godhead of Christ -- if Christ be not God, his death can have no greater efficacy than the death of St. Paul, and its whole character is changed. Take the atonement of none for sin, then justification must be by works not by faith --if take doctrine of Holy Spirit of none or that spirit is not given then man has no help in his moral conflicts from heaven but is left wholly to himself -- if there be no supernatural renewal of our nature, then must we live and die with the original taint unpurged, and the actual habit unbroken -- if there be no attested pardon, there can be no rejoicing in God; if there can be no conscious internal intercourse with God, then worship is a form, and devotion a mere sentiment. See you not the immense difference it makes in experience and practice then? In one case man pleads as the ground of his pardon the merits of his Savior -- in the other he pleads his own merits -- in the one case God the Holy Spirit gives him hope and comfort and strength -- In the other man is without God in the world literally and truly so -- In one case he is assured by God's own Son from heaven, that God loves him; in the other he at the best is left to infer that he may possibly obtain pardon at his hands -- in the one case he can go to God in prayer, in all troubles, in all sorrows, in all dangers, and be assured of help -- positive help -- in the other no other effect can possibly be ascribed to prayer, than you might assign to a musical instrument, it is to calm and tranquillise and soothe, and like David's harp to cast out the evil spirit of melancholy, and grief -- and then for practice, it is not the simple hearty conformity to God's will, which is the result of a new nature; but such as human infirmity can give to a law about which the merciful God is not over strict -- I would rather be a heathen at the foot of Socrates than such a Christian for Socrates would not have deprived me of God, or the inspiration and help of some benevolent presiding genius -- I state the matter so to show you the connection between doctrine and experience and practice, and to impress upon you the necessity of this prayer -- Will you have some such emasculated system for the religion of Christ-- Will you have Christianity without Christ -- the dispensation of the Spirit without the Spirit -- the laver of regeneration without the water -- the altar without the fire, the holy place without the holy inhabitant, the temple without God -- you this day choose for yourselves and your children if you feel for both, then pray and <u>worship</u> -- God's ordinances --

to these we pray that our hearts may be inclined

Men have been altered by authority -- but God is to be publicly acknowledged -- prayer offered -- assemble to hear his word, sacraments administered imperatively on the Sabbath-- and on such other occasions as edification may require

Whatever is changed these things remain,

Order, which implies solemnity, reverence, method, and adaption to real edification --

Constancy -- our mercies demanding constant acknowledgement and our wants constant supply, we are not therefore to forsake the assembling etc. --

Spirituality For God is a Spirit and requires truth in the inward parts --

Pray for a heart "inclined" to this -- wonderful as to an angel it must be, that man allowed to come to God, assured that in all places where God records his name he will come to him and bless him -- should be backward and negligent you know that this is one of the blots upon our nature -- be attending his Sabbath -- love his house -- come when God calls -- be examples of this to your families -- place them from their earliest years under his shadow, bring them to put their trust under the wings of the holy one of Israel -- and then often and delightfully will you sing How amiable etc.

3. Moral practice - This the end of worship, not a substitute for moral duties -- but to lead to them -- Wash then hands and so encompass his altar -- lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting -- put off your theories, and turn again to see this great sight -- For these are his statutes -- his statute law -- and God will not hold him guiltless who violates it --

How beautiful a picture a people inclined in heart to all these -- Scriptural doctrine -- to his ardent, reverential worship -- and departing from the house of God to adorn the gospel in all -- Why should it not be so -- God can make it so, and for this we pray "That he may incline our hearts etc."

IV. That our suplication before him to maintain our cause and the cause of his people may be nigh etc.

We have an individual cause our soul's health -- our salvation -- To what dangers exposed -- prosperity, adversity, health, success, etc. all war against the soul -- or may all promote it as God shall maintain our cause or not --

We have a public cause -- God's cause our cause, or we are not of God -- my cause says Solomon, and the cause of my people, the only church which God had on earth, -- we must not disjoin -- maintain my cause oh Lord, and thy cause which is also mine. But what is God's cause -- not that of a party of any party as such-- his cause is the cause of his dominion over men -- so far as our party cause harmonizes with that it is his cause, and we may pray that he may maintain -- but no farther and we are not to forget that his cause is connected also with other branches of the church, and we pray him also to maintain that -- the blessed position into which we ought to wish to see parties who hold Christ to come, is that they may in no case make runs upon each other; but upon the world --

God's cause is the cause of his religion -- It is always in contest and danger, and though he could maintain it without us, he chooses to do it by our actions and prayers -- let it have both.

It is the cause of his truth -- let this be a sanctifying truth, never man bedarkened by error, and when it is obscured bring it forth again in the full effulgence of that original glory in which it came from thee --

It is the cause of simplicity and power against superstition vain and delusive -- how it has deformed the church of Christ -- how has man intruded into the place of God -- religion weighed down, helpless, and inefficient under the weight of the very armaments with which the folly of man has loaded it -- and there is no efficacy in it -- in vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men -- God has rained upon me distresses, let us feel for these parts of the inheritance of God with more pity and pray etc.

It is the cause of his honour against idols which have usurped his places, and made millions of men forget their maker -- We are to pray for missions.

It is the cause of justice against wrong -- we are to pray for widows, orphans, slaves, oppressed and where the cause of mercy against misery. We are to pray for all who are sick and in prison, --

It is the cause of our country, for happily we can say that the cause of our people is the cause of God -- her prosperous trade, for her profits will not be withheld from God -- her abiding free institutions for these -- on the honorable efforts of her religion a light to the world -- her extended commerce for she carries out the richer merchandise -- the stability of her empire, for where her power is felt, mankind in the highest sense feels her mercy and the mercies of the gospel.

The cause of the prosperity and increase of the church against decay

Now says Solomon; let this our supplication plead our cause and the cause of the church, which is thy cause, be nigh unto the Lord <u>day and night</u> -- expression singularly striking and beautiful -- Let us for a moment enter into its import --

1. It may import -- that a prayer of this kind may be nigh unto God, in the sense of its being first answered

As to ourselves, we may pray for many things -- a right to do so, for <u>all</u> things -- but Lord whatever prayers we put up before him for health in sickness, for ease in pain, for etc. yet let this prayer be always nearest then our first answered -- maintain our cause the cause of our souls health and as to our country -- we put up many prayers; but whether war or peace -- prosperity etc. yet this prayer be nigh then -- maintain thy cause in our land, let that prosper.

As to the world -- we pray for diffused commerce peace cultivation, liberty but whether our cause sheds its beams maintain thy cause in it, let that prayer be nigh thee. And if we seek first the kingdom of God etc. all other things etc.

2. It imports, that prayers may be deposited with God to be answered as the matter shall require --

Interesting consideration that such prayers have been lodged with God in all ages -- and I doubt not we are often enjoying, and the church shall enjoy, the collective influence of the prayers of faith often, by the saints when on earth -- and it is our privilege -- let us learn then to pray with understanding of our state and circumstances -- and those of the church, let us look out to probabilities -- and let us make a copious deposit and lodgment of our faith and love and desires with God, that he may answer as the matter shall --

3. That there are seasons when prayers may be with more than usual confidence deposited with God, to answer as the matter may require --

Sabbaths - general intercession
Sacraments - Baptism for children - Lords Supper
Solemn dedication of ourselves to God - covenant
Festivals and fasts -
And surely on such a day as this - [1]

We talk often of a present blessing; but let us not forget future -- I am for the doctrine of a present blessing, yet I watch to the future also, the upper and nether spring -- the hill and sweeping valley

If I should in any future time be languid, and careless, and in danger, O let my prayer this day, when I have power with Thee, be nigh Thee O God, remember it, and maintain my cause as the matter may require, and if as I hope I may never cease to pray, join then my remembered prayers with my present ones and give me the double blessing --

So as a Society -- and for the world - as we have secured the blessings of the prayers of former ages, the men who have sighed and cried - so let us make a liberal lodgment of our prayers for - her conquests, and her glories - so let our prayers be nigh thee day and night.

That all the people --
I delight to come with every new place of worship etc. - the benefit to be increased to the world - higher style of Christianity in our day - prayers for heathen - contributions - missionaries - example etc.

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1 This sermon was preached for the opening of a new chapel.

Luke 21, 33. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away. Among the most important subjects of christian knowledge and understanding which from the first existence of man as a creature it is necessary for him to know in his God as a guilty creature it stands in which he may obtain peace, a meet and sufficient way whereby he may be delivered from wrath which is higher than himself as he is as an accountable being is to appear in the presence of God his Judge he has a clear, express & explicit knowledge to obtain this peace & safety this must be one of the greatest acts of divine mercy, and next to the blessing of God in giving a revelation. In these subjects as the Romanists acknowledge that that revelation which is authentic & infallible. Then from the last reason I suspect that the words of Christ are to be taken in a large, that the words for Christ is the copy of his will in one age, and his copy in another, that in a word Christ being the first preacher of the Gospel world may pass and take flowers and decay, then the ground of all consequence, of all hope shall fully would be removed from under us, the Bible would become obsolete, the

SERMON III

Luke 21: 33 "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.-"

Among the most pressing wants of man is that of instruction in those things which from their interest, and importance make for his peace. As a creature it is necessary for him to know his God, as a guilty creature, the terms on which he may obtain pardon, as weak and insufficient by what means he may be led to the rock which is higher than himself; and as an accountable being soon to appear in the presence of God his Judge he needs directions, copious and explicit how to obtain his favor. To supply this want was one of the greatest acts of divine mercy, and next to the blessing of possessing a revelation on these subjects is the assurance we have that that revelation like its author is unchangeable. Were there the least reason to suspect that the will of God with respect to us could change, that the revelation which is the copy of his will in one age, is not its copy in another, that in a word truth like everything else in this lower world may rise and fall, flower and decay, then the ground of all confidence, of all hope, of all piety would be removed from under us, the Bible itself would become obsolete. The foundation would be taken away and what could the righteous do. In every age therefore it has been the care of those who have communicated divine revelation to man, to impress upon the world, this grand distinction between the words of man and the words of God. The one may pass away; but the other cannot. The counsel of the Lord says David shall stand and he will do all his pleasure. A prophet hears a voice saying to him "Cry," and he answered, "What shall I cry? All flesh is grass and the glory," etc. The same sentiment is impressed by the Great Teacher, in this and other similar passages, it echoed too by the Apostles. In the Apostles whose epistles close the sacred code, and who all unite with St. Paul in declaring, that "Jesus Christ with his doctrine is the same yesterday and today and forever."

To this subject, the stability of the divine word we now call your attention. Christ had been uttering severe and fearful prophecies, his hearers might even from their interest be disposed to disbelieve them, and thus destroy that moral impression which he intended to produce. He therefore repeats the sentiment of prophet in even stronger language. Not only shall the grass wither and the flower fade; but heaven and earth shall pass away, the expanded scroll of the firmament shall be shrivelled up, the solid earth shall be dissolved, but my words, whether on this or any other occasion shall not pass away.

We shall consider this stability of the divine word.

I. In its principles

II. In its extent

III. In its proofs
IV. In its practical influence
I. In its principles

The divine word may be considered as composed of law, or the rule prescribing the conduct of a creature; of a gracious system of redemption, by which those who have violated that law may be recovered; and of prophecies which either respect the great person who was to fulfill the redeeming scheme, or events which one under his mediatorial administration (he breaks off here by scratching out the next three lines)

The stability of all these stand on very obvious grounds. The law of God is founded upon his absolute right over the service of the creature he has made, and as that right resting itself, not upon accidental circumstances, not upon agreement but upon the nature of the thing itself, it must be perpetuated as long as the creature who is the subject of it shall remain in being, we have no indication that God gives up his right, and the creature cannot free itself from obligation. Even the goodness of God would forbid such a giving up of the rights in as much as law properly understood is the rule by which a creature may best secure and increase its happiness, wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just and good etc.

The permanence of the gracious interposition of Christ in our behalf, under the limitations and conditions which one attached to it -- rests also on the exuberance of the compassion and kindness of God our Savior. The same reasons which led to the adoption of the gracious plan remain through the whole period of the duration of world in which the successive generations of men are continued in a state of probation. The work and dangers of man remain the same, the compassion and love of God remain unaltered, and it is not till heaven and earth pass away that man is placed in a new circumstance to become the subject of a different dispensation; and even then the redeeming scheme does not pass away but is fulfilled in the eternal glorification of saints, and the everlasting destruction of the impenitent, according to the terms and warnings of the plan itself. The certainty of the prophetic part of the divine word rests on the prescience of God joined with his almighty power. On either scheme of impulseness or free agency, it must be fulfilled -- In the one case who can stay his hand in the other the prediction is made with the perfect knowledge of the last determination of a force in volition and action - known unto God all from the beginning to the ending.

II. The extent of the proposition

This may be collected from parallel passages with respect to the revelation of God in the Old Testament. Not one jot or tittle not a point or turning of a letter - the most exact and minute accomplishment, continuance without the least abrogation --

1. This applies to the legal part of the Revelation of God - In full force as to its demands Love the Lord thy God - Though man sinned - through Adam federal head, and transmitted a dying body and vicious mind to his descendants - the law

remained in force - Not unjust since a dispensation of mercy came in along with this new condition - This rendered the death of Christ necessary - necessary every moment that faith may be imputed for righteousness, not a jot of the demand is abridged; but Christ answers it for all that believe -

2. We are to understand the proposition to imply also, that the efficacy of the provision made for the salvation of the guilty is permanent - not a jot or tittle of that passes away - efficacy remains from age to age - from Adam - to the last sinner who may find mercy before the close of the final scene - It may be increased but cannot be diminished beyond that point of sufficiency - dispensation of the Gospel more powerful than the law - future ages may witness even more copious effusions of the Spirit - but under all circumstances, he that believeth shall be saved --

3. The interesting predictions of the word also must be fulfilled to their iota - Whether we understand them or not, there is a truth, that must be accomplished -

Prophecy of the utmost importance to good men - not to gratify curiosity - but support hope - the world is dark but that presents a brighter day - the stream of time has hitherto been rushed through its course with tumultuous waves, agitated by winds, darkened with lowering clouds - we track its course and see it subsiding into quiet, reflecting now brightening skies, rolling through future ages with peaceful grandeur, till it falls into eternity. Is it wrong to feel interested in the cause and reign of the Redeemer? Those who attended his cross gazed on him till the clouds removed him out of sight, saw the triumph of his cross and desolating sweep of his scepter - Does he now arrest our notice, as the Lamb of God washing away sin - as the Lion of the destroying his enemies, does the struggle still continue, are we not interested in the result - God has shown to his servants what shall be hereafter - "From the tops of the rocks we behold him, and from the hills we see him - " From this moment to his final conquest of the world, from thence to his coming to judge the nations, when he shall seal up the vision and give the whole the authentication of his verity. Not a jot or tittle shall fail - This of his may be obscure, enough, it is clear to him who is to bring it to pass - The instruments may be wanting - he calleth them out not by names as though they were - The whole scheme may be intricate. Remember O man, thou art not appointed to marvel, the Lion of the Tribe he hath prevailed to open the book - The thing may appear impossible, but what is impossible to man etc. Heaven and earth may pass away etc.

To all these reasonings one may now

III. Add proofs of the permanence and certainty of the divine word. If we prove that the words of the Lord have in all ages to the present moment - This at least justifies the sentiment as to all past ages, and lays the strongest ground to admit the proposition in all its extent.

1. The laws of God have continued to this day

This Book proves it, here are the laws, where is their repeal - The Law of Moses was given from Sinai the gospel law was brought by the Son from heaven - And what moment has God

descended in Majesty to repeal the law of Moses? - where has an incarnate God been seen, to blot out rule, and cancel the obligation? It continues then in the Bible.

But it continues in the recognition of the world -- That we are under a Son of God and that he is judge is acknowledged not in religious institutions only; but in civil ones - oath - last offered to the God who knows truth and punishes falsehood.

It continues in the mind and conscience of every sinful man - Why do the thoughts of a heathen accuse, or else excuse - Why that restraint upon your sins - you see an eye which sees you. Why that remorse after crime - a hand comes from the wall, and writes thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting etc.

2. The Gospel of the grace of God continues to this day, unabated in its energy and where is the proof of that ?

It is in the church - the faithful have not failed - from the sons of men Zion may look upon her numerous progeny distinguished by different names, and say Who hath he gotten in them? And what is the answer, they were born not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, by the word of God which endureth forever --

It is proved by the constant efficacy of preaching -- by that it still pleases God to save them that believe -- What Sabbath leaves us, but it bears away, marked in its register, the glorious proofs that the gospel has not lost its saving power - How many are striken to the heart and cry What shall we do? How many are bound up whom God has bruised. How many wearied with the world spring into new life, how many rise up, under the inspiration of an agency divine, and undecaying, and call him blessed who is the same yesterday today etc.

It is proved by the effect of the Gospel in heathen lands - the same commission given to St. Paul is still given to many of God's honoured servants to go to the Gentiles, and turn them from darkness to light, and they go, and the Gentiles are turned from dumb idols to service of the living God, Bel boweth down

3. The proof that not a jot or tittle of prophecy shall pass away is equal in strength -
The whole of time past from the time the first prediction was fulfilled, to this moment gives its witness to the truth of the "sure word of prophecy." Pursue the track of any age, and monuments of the most striking, and often of the most stupendous kind, appear at any stage to attest that God is not a man that he should lie etc. Behold the race of Ham and ask whether he has not been a servant of servants to his brethren - Visit Egypt in its present degradation, and say whether it is not the basest of all kingdoms as the Lord hath spoken, see typical persons and symbols, and minute prophecies all fulfilled in the persons and offices of Jews. Behold the Jews, are they not a proverb and bye word among all people - Trace the desolate shores of Tigris and Euphrates, and look for the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, if you find them, then has the word of the Lord fallen to the ground, and they are not swift with the lesson of destruction.

Read the predictions of our Lord respecting Jerusalem, and compare with the history, and behold in them history anticipated. We might multiply the instances; but it is enough --
For ever Lord is thy word settled in heaven. Heaven and earth shall pass away etc.

IV. To consider the subject in its practical influence, and none on which we can fix the attention is more fruitful of improvement --

"My words shall not pass away." With what an aweful emphasis ought this to fall on the ear and heart of a sinner. Do you neglect the great salvation, he hath said those words cannot pass away, you cannot escape Do you refuse the call of mercy he hath said Because I have word and that word cannot pass away. Do you live in sins of various kind Hear that word which cannot fail, They that do such things cannot inherit the kingdom of God.
Heaven and earth shall pass, but when they shall have passed, these words will have all . . .

My word shall not pass away, What a cheering sound is this to the seeker of salvation. Seek the Lord and ye shall live - Turn unto me and I will turn etc. - He that cometh to me etc. - He that believeth shall not be confounded.
Remember the words are not pass etc.

What a source of encouragement to believers!

You are in him unless through manifold, etc. - you say God hath forgotten me, etc. Hear the word which cannot pass I have graven them upon the etc. the house of your hands, etc. fear not.

You are surrounded with enemies but who hath said Greater is he that is for you etc. Satan hath desired etc.

You have your difficult duties and services to perform, but hear, My strength is made perfect in thy weakness.

The world surrounds you with changing scenes, what then In me you shall have peace. Fear not I have overcome the world. I have deprived it of its power to harm.

You are menaced with death - in your families, in your persons - said the voice all flesh is grass etc. but the word of the Lord endureth forever, that word of promise hath built a bridge across the gulf of death - I am the resurrection and the life etc.

Lastly, Heaven and earth shall pass etc.
You shall see them, but amidst that wreck, there is one word which cannot pass - that will rest the head of the saint amidst falling words. In my Father's house are many mansions, Because I live ye shall live also.

Go on then amidst every change. Remember that the word of the Lord liveth and abideth forever. This is your story, your shelter, your rock, build on this and you shall never be confounded.

SERMON IV

John 3: 16 "God so loved the world he - "

It would be superfluous to remind you that these words form part of a conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus of the sect of the Pharisees and a ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night for the purpose of conversing with him. It is a great injustice done to the character of this distinguished man by using his name as descriptive of the character of those persons who are ashamed to avow their belief in Jesus: the name of Nicodemus ought never to stand to designate those persons who are ashamed of Christ - ashamed of following the convictions of their minds; but it ought rather to designate those persons who are sincere enquirers after truth, - who have minds open to conviction. There was no reason assigned for his coming to Jesus by night except that he might find the great teacher less occupied and more at liberty to converse with him, for he was not ashamed on two trying occasions to own him: on the first occasion he was loudly condemned by the Pharisees and rulers of the people; and the second after all the disciples had forsaken him he assisted in removing the body of Jesus from the cross, and prepared spices with which it was to be embalmed. It is evident Jesus Christ saw no such heart reaching in Nicodemus as is ascribed to him: he discovered the sincerity of his desires to be instructed, in consequence he opened to him more fully than to any other person in the course of his ministry on earth, in one discourse, the great mysteries of his kingdom. In the first place he instructed him on the important doctrine of the new birth - the new creation of the corrupted Spirit by the power of God, transforming it again to his moral image and restoring it to fellowship with him. He introduces to him in the next place the doctrine of divine influence, showing him that this change is only produced by the special operations of the spirit of God which he was more largely to administer than had been administered to the World. He lays down in his mind a principle of religion which if acted upon would preserve us from great errors viz: that we should not be averse to receive a religious doctrine because it is inexplicable to us "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the spirit." He intimates to him in the next place the fact of his ascension into Heaven, and gives him a proof of his divinity by informing him that the Son of Man thus conversing with him was in Heaven. He leads him even to the cross and sets himself before his eyes crucified for sinners "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Then he introduces the words of the text which may be considered as an

epitome of the whole gospel, comprising everything that is spoken in every other part of the Word of God respecting the great economy of human salvation - its principles, operations and glorious results.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have eternal life."

For our edification this evening I will consider the text as intended to illustrate the Love of God to Man.

1st By the subject "Love"
2nd By the gift given
3rd By the practical results which are represented as flowing from it.

I. The love of God <u>to man</u>, referring us to the subject which was the object of that love, "God so loved the world"

The consideration of the subject "Love" is interesting to us in as much as it sets before us the love of God to Man under several very important considerations. By the world is meant the World of Man. Recollect that World of Man was not a world of angels, nor a world of Holy and obedient creatures - no, nor even a world of penitent sinners, but of <u>fallen</u> Man: - a race entirely alienated from God, corrupted in every power and principle of their minds: - a race who had brought itself willingly under the influence of Satan, who had not only sinned, but loved sin; - utterly impenitent, and knew no other distaste to evil than what arises from the bad consequences of sin which they felt in the present life or apprehended in the future.

The World so loved was corrupted; corrupt without exception. The imagination of the thoughts of every man's heart was evil, only evil and that continually. There was no gracious feeling of repentance in any man's bosom, and the sin committed against God, was loved and cherished. The rebellion brandished against his throne was still persisted in. Now if God so loved a world of this description then

First. His love was free

He was under no kind of obligation to love a world of this character. I grant that when God produces a creature by his power he confers certain rights upon that creature, - a right to be loved by their Creator, - a right to be protected, - a right to full and ample enjoyment so long as God chooses to continue it in existence: This right every angel and every Worm has: it arises out of the nature and necessity of the thing and applies to all beings through the vast and graduated scale of existence. This was the case with man originally when God spoke him out of earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. That act that created him conferred on him rights and speaking with reverence laid Deity himself under obligation to love, preserve, bless, and succour, his creature thus made; but the moment the moral agent commits sin, all rights on his part and obligation on the part of God, are annulled; then he becomes the object of divine displeasure, there is no obligation on the part of God to love, to cherish and succour any such creature. He might be banished from the glory of his power into utter darkness and the justice of God would be glorified. If then God loved a creature who had

forfeited all right to love that love must be free. It spontaniously flowed from the bosom of Deity and comes recommended to us under this consideration God did that for Man there was no obligation for him to do. It sets before us in an interesting view the tender and compassionate character of the love of God. Secondly. If God love a world of this description it proves his love is Sovereign.

When I use the term sovereign, I mean, it is supreme and governing; - that it is the most eminent and dominating principle in the divine nature, and this is borne out by the testimony of Scripture. It must be interesting to every guilty man to contemplate God under such a character. Love is the great and ruling attribute. Much has been said respecting the harmony of the divine attributes; if the phrase merely signified that the attributes of God were exercised in such a manner as not to infringe upon each others rights I will allow the propriety of the term, but if it is supposed by the term "harmonized" that all the perfections of God are equalized this is not accordant with scripture. It is not a manner of speaking whatever it may be, that accords with the views of God given us in this book. Here mercy is seen supreme - mercy prevailing against judgment. Under all the characters by which God has been pleased to manifest himself to man, the character of love is the perfection "God is Love". "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God for God is Love." He has passed by and proclaimed his name and has written it on every page of this book in all his dispensations "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity transgressions and sin." We may say with respect to this principle in God, as we say of charity in men, it "is the brightest of the train and strengthens all the rest." If God loved a world such as I have briefly described, then this love to Man must be considered a quality of a soverign, tender and gracious kind. The persons loved might have been justly and properly hated, and there were many things in them actually hated by God. What but infinite compassion and the most condescending tenderness made God to hate sin and yet love the sinner? We consider that love of the tenderest kind, even in the intercourse we have with our fellow creatures, that overlooks what is base, ungrateful and bad in their character and conduct and fixes on those considerations that endear them to the heart. As, for instance, if we consider the love of the Father to the prodigal son it is remarkable for its tenderness; overlooking the dishonor he had done to the family, - the base course of life he had pursued; overlooking all that wretchedness to which he had reduced himself and fixing himself on one Idea, - his filial relation "This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found." Such is the love of God to man; overlooking his guilt - overlooking our pollutions and degradations and the dishonor we have done him and firing on us in the character of children, and under that character loving us without polluting the spotless purity of his nature.

Thirdly. It proves its permanence.

It is not a sudden impulse of passion, but it is a permanent principle and that gives his creature hope. It is a

mark of imperfection to be subject to sudden ebullitions. The passion may subside into perfect indifference or rise into the opposite extreme. Suppose the divine being subject to changes of this kind how little confidence could we have in him. The love of the World proves the permanence of this principle. It might be proved by this circumstance that this love sprung up in the eternal mind toward man when the sin was only in Idea: - when it existed only in purpose, the redeeming scheme was laid then: - after a lapse of eternity, if in that eternity it remained unchanged. It was necessary for a variety of reasons that the Son should be incarnated as soon as Man fell. The intelligence of God's intentions <u>was</u> communicated to the Patriarchs in the early ages of the world. How was it received? Christ in the type, - Christ in the prediction, - Christ in the shadowy dispensation of the law, was rejected. He was despised and rejected of men from the first annunciation of the great promise: his religion was perverted, - corrupted, and turned into an instrument of superstition and idolatry. Every age sunk deeper in wretchedness and woe. Notwithstanding all the provocations which were offered to the divine majesty, and the ill reception of this important truth in different ages, when the fulness of time came this glorious pledge was renewed, the unchanging character of God's love was manifested, and in the worst age of the world God sent his Son, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law. This is finely illustrated in one parable of Jesus which was spoken in reference to the Jewish people but may be applied to the world. He gave a vineyard to till and sent forth his servants to receive the fruits of it, they took one and beat him, another and stoned him, and thus they stoned one and killed another and last of all. What? and last of all, after all these successive Prophets had been ill-treated, - last of all did he send forth the harvestmen to destroy these murderers? No, but <u>last of all</u> he <u>sent his Son</u> to show how permanent a principle the love of God to man is in the divine mind. It is never till man has rejected the offers of mercy that justice receives its commissions to put forth the sword. These views seem to result from the subject.

II. This love is still further illustrated by the gift bestowed. "God so loved the world that he <u>gave his only begotten Son</u>."

1st. This was the greatest gift God could give. The greatest gift which all the magnificent resources of deity could furnish. Who was that Son? No less a being than one equal with the father and God himself. Can we doubt it after what Jesus says to Nicodemus in the 13th verse? How strongly constructive must be those mens' minds or hearts, (I will not presume to determine whether the fault is in the judgment or in the heart) who can readily see many plain declarations of scripture bearing testimony to the divinity of Jesus and yet dare level him with creatures like themselves. "No man hath ascended into heaven, but the Son of Man who came down from Heaven." We have first the ascension of the God Man spoken of, in the next place his pre-existence laid down. "He that came down from Heaven." Lastly we have that peculiar and incomprehensible attribute

ascribed to him the power of filling all his creation. That Son of Man who conversed with Nicodemus was asserted to be in Heaven, shining forth with unclouded glory, and receiving the worship of men and angels. The gift given is the Son of God. Had he sent Prophets however they might have been qualified by the inspiring spirit: - Had he sent angels themselves; - had the highest intelligences that burn about his throne and display the natural and moral glories of his nature - had they been sent to take up their residence with man all these gifts, great as they would have been, would have been infinitely below the being who was given to man, and would fail to illustrate, as this gift illustrates, the astonishing height and depth and length and breadth of the love of God. "God so loved the world" in that degree he loved it, that he gave his only begotten Son. 2ndly. His love is furthered heightened if we consider the circumstances under which he was given and the purpose for which he was given to the world.

He was not given to the world in any form, character or circumstance which could at all accord with the glories of the divine nature: he did not appear in the world in the form of God: He did not come into the world surrounded with the magnificence of Heaven: He did not appear seated on the throne of the universe and commanding, by authority, universal homage. He left that glory which he had; hence we hear him say "Glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." To intimate to us that when Jesus Christ came into the world and the Son was given, in some sense, though incomprehensible to us, he suffered a temporary loss of that glory. This the apostle expresses "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God but he emptied himself." I do not pretend to say what that means. No man can tell what the emptying was unless he knew what the fulness was. No man who cannot comprehend God can tell how Jesus Christ was emptied - There was some important and emphatic sense in which he was emptied and made himself of no reputation. It was not a loss of glory merely but the infliction of pain and suffering. If we consider that the only begotten Son was given by the Father to the World for the express purpose of suffering, then we catch some Idea - some faint glimpse of that degree in which God so loved us. There is one passage in the book of Isaiah that illustrates this. "It pleased the Father to bruise him, to put him to grief." What an expression. "It pleased" him, even pleased the father to bruise, and afflict and put to death him who was his well beloved Son. Some principle operated in the divine mind more powerful than the tenderness of the father's love even to the Son himself. That principle was love to the human race. That gave even pleasure to a God. It is that which explains "My Soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." It was that principle which caused him to withdraw the light of his countenance from him in that hour when he said "My God my God why hast thou forsaken me." "God so loved the world that he gave his Son -" a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs" that the world of sinners might not perish.

3rdly. The gift illustrates the love of God still more than

this. When he gave His Son to be incarnate, and when he gave him to suffer he gave him likewise as a gift which will comprehend some of the most important advantages the creature could possibly receive. Let us consider the subject for a moment. When God gave his Son to Man he gave him
First as an infallible teacher - one to bring truth from heaven; - that truth in which we are most interested - and that truth which man had lost without a possibility of regaining: - that truth which no philosophy, no other revelation even by God himself could possibly give to the human race. What glory does this give to the Christian system! He who was with God and who was in fact God Himself he became God to Man. Every part of the gospel is a bright emanation of the divine mind or the streaming forth of the intelligence of the uncloudded God himself. We have truth without mixture of error - the mind of God revealed by God himself.
2ndly When he gave his Son he gave a universal sacrifice. I told you this morning there was never a true sacrifice in the world but the sacrifice of Jesus. The same idea may be repeated here. All other sacrifices were typical and symbolical of him. He was the true passover: - the Lamb of God: - the true sin offering. He whose body had been prepared was brought into the world pure and spotless in order that he might give a pure and acceptable offering to God in behalf of the sins of the world. What is comprehended in the gift of the Son? The gift of that being who came to interpose his life as the great sin offering. He interposed in all ages betwixt divine justice and offending man. He came to reconcile God to Man and subdue the enmity, in the heart of Man, to God. He came to open a way to the throne of grace that sinners might approach, confessing their transgressions, and find mercy at the hand of God: - find their hope, their joy, their rest. The trembling spirit alarmed at the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and apprehending the justice and purity and terror of a perfectly pure, just, holy, and true God, the trembling spirit can find no repose except in that sacrifice which turns wrath into complacency.
3rdly When God gave his Son he gave man a Saviour, - one that could repair the ruins of the fall: - raise men out of the grave of his pollutions and quicken him to spiritual life. Rebuild the temple of God and prepare it for the entrance of the divine inhabitant: - introduce a pure and hallowing principle: - pure religion into the human heart, and regulate every faculty of the Spirit and action of the life, by a directing and controling influence: one who should sit as a refiner's fire and fuller's soap. - one appointed by God himself to create man anew, and to present the once fallen and polluted Spirit perfect and spotless "Without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." "Present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." He gave his Son then as a Saviour.

But the gift implies more than this:
4th He gave him as an intercessor - as a mediator betwixt God and Man.

This is a most important doctrine: next to the sacrifice, is the intercession of Christ. We have a name we can

never use without prevailing with God. Every believer has a friend in heaven, - an advocate in the Courts of Heaven, - guiding him by his counsel - setting his love upon him, and making it a part of his official character to save him entirely and bring him to everlasting life. This is a glorious doctrine, that enables man so tried, to exercise particular trust and dependence on one who assumed his nature; - who has taken the sympathies of a man and joined to them the compassions of a God. He may be approached with confidence for we shall ever find mercy at his hands. "We have a great high priest passed into the heavens Jesus the Son of God, made like unto us; being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted. He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

5thly He is given too as the resurrection and the life. This completes the whole character. "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that believeth on me shall never die." Believers never die. The apostles do not call the death of believers death, but they call it a sleep. "We are not to be sorry as men without hope for them that sleep: For so fell asleep the first martyr Stephen. Under this softer term the death of believers is represented to us in the New Testament. To those who realize this character Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Knowing that bye and bye he will come again and awaken the sleeping saints and raise them to a state of immortality, that in heaven they may behold his glory forever: - unite the glorified Body with the immortalistic and glorified spirit and thus complete the whole design of saving them from the power of death, and placing them in felicity and glory for ever and ever.

If God has given us in Jesus Christ so many blessings, then, how true is it, that "God so loved the world" that neither men nor angels can conceive of this love: It has a height they cannot reach, - it has a depth they cannot fathom. It is a love every recollection of which ought to overwhelm our Spirits and excite some faint returns of love and gratitude.

III. The practical results, with the manner and extent in which they are brought into operation. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but that he might have everlasting life." He had a double object in view.

First. We are not to take the term perish in the sense of annihilation. That is a dreadful effect of sin, and to have a rescue from this would deserve eternal praises to our great deliverer; for who can conceive of the loss which annihilation implies - the loss of an immortal spirit, but annihilation is but half of hell because the hell of sinners is composed of the loss of good and the infliction of evil: but it is after all half and if God had delivered us by his Son from so great a death eternity then would have been too short to utter all his praise.

But observe the term punish is used not to signify the annihilation of man, but his eternal punishment according to the tenor of the first sentence. "In the day thou eatest thereof" not as it is in our translation "thou shalt surely die" but

in the day thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die - ever dying - suffering death without end, pain of body and pain inflicted upon the deepest sensibilities of the spirit forever. Contemplate that - if you can stand upon that abyss of ruin, - dart your eyes into the dark profound where are the spirits of those who are disowned of God - separated from the presence of God - "where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" endeavor to realise the miseries of that state and connect with that idea the idea of eternity itself and then say, what you owe to that love, which raised you from this depth of ruin, and not merely saved you from it but to bring you to everlasting life. That is the other idea that we might not perish but Secondly that we might have everlasting life. This does not merely signify the continuance of life. To experience everlasting life is not merely to live for ever but to live in the immediate presence of God - to behold his face, receive immediate communication of knowledge, life and love, and all those copious streams which he can communicate, and which a glorified body can receive. It is to associate with beings equally high and happy with ourselves and in consequence of this peculiar situation, in circumstances of continual improvement forever - approximating to all the perfections of the great God himself. Contemplate that: for a moment realize to yourselves a state of the body in which you shall never hunger or thirst, - never feel pain: in which the body shall never obstruct the operations of the mind. Realize to yourselves the idea of the mind, with all its powers, ever active, placed in circumstances in which it increases in knowledge, happiness, and perfection. Contemplate all the bliss all the rich and inexpressive feelings of the mind in the full beams of his presence and his glory and then say, in contrast of that distress into which you would have fallen, how much you owe to that God who gave his Son that you might not perish but have everlasting life.

In contemplating these results observe these blessings are restricted to them that believe. "Whosoever <u>believeth</u> on Him." It intimates to us that though God by his Son brings a man from death to life it is by a process of moral improvement. This we call holiness. God's designs can never come into operation respecting us, except by the instrumentality of faith, which by its own nature purifies the heart from sin and is the great agent of sanctification. The faith here spoken of is not a mere inoperative belief of the gospel, - such a faith as is received from education, but that full persuasion of every truth the word of God contains which causes the truth to be operative on the understanding, will and affections. It is this living faith, - the faith by which we live, which leads us to make all necessary preparations for heaven.

Lastly. But the greatest certainty in point of encouragement is the consideration that these blessings are unrestricted that <u>whosoever</u> believeth on him shall not perish. There have been attempts made to restrict the mercy of God. The Jews made such attempts - they forbade the gospel to be preached to the gentiles but in the true spirit of the text the apostles declared that "In Jesus Christ there was neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Sythian, bond nor free, but the same Lord over all

was rich to all that call upon him." There is no restriction of the grace of God to man arising from nature. There have been persons in all ages who have restricted some of the superior benefits of religion to persons of certain ranks and characters - they have considered the poorer and lower ranks of society as placed in an inferior condition. These distinctions are all destroyed by the doctrine of the text, which declares, the Saviour is the common Saviour of all men, and by the practice of Jesus Christ himself who made the poor the objects of his mission "The poor have the gospel preached to them" Whosoever believeth on him.

There are others who have restricted the mercy of God to persons in certain circumstances of health and the full possession of their minds and excluding them from salvation if repentance is deferred to a deathbed. I know of no absolute impossibility of men finding mercy in circumstances of this kind although it is declared and perhaps arising from a good principle, from a fear least men assured of eternal salvation should procrastinate their salvation to their latest hour. I trust you will not suppose I am encouraging you to the least delay by asserting, what I consider essential to the mercy of God. There are so many chances against a person being in any condition of receiving the word of life and the influences of the spirit in that hour. So much danger in delay; sin hardens the heart so much that I need not render the gloom more deplorable by shutting out a sinner entirely in his last moments from the mercy of God. The cloud is thick enough without attempting to quench the glimmering ray that shines through it. The declaration that whosoever believeth, warrants us to carry the glad tidings of salvation to every sinner and pursue him to his latest breath crying "behold the Lamb of God." Others imagine God by a decree has excluded a number from the influence of the spirit. I do not want to quarrel with these who differ. If God has any book of decrees by which he has excluded any of his creatures from the possibility of salvation by Jesus Christ I should like to have that book and read it.

If there are persons who have found, in the secret counsels of heaven, any declarations of this kind, I would say to them in the name of the mercy of God let us see these declarations or let us still have our belief determined by the rule God has given. I do not know anything that goes more directly to strike at the root of all hopes of heaven than this doctrine. If any are excepted then I may, and if I may be excepted how can I hope? With what joy should such persons receive the words of the text "Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish" be the number of their sins ever so aggravated - though he has committed crimes as deep in guilt as the treachery of Judas yet is there a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. "Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish." Confess, hate, forsake thy sins. Pray that strength may be imparted to you. Come to him whose specific designation it is to seek and to save all men: He will receive whosoever cometh unto him and they shall never perish but have everlasting life.

In conclusion I have one remark it is that the text and the doctrine it contains is in fact something like the figure

of a cloud by day and of fire by night which went before the Israelites: it is said it gave light to the Israelites but was dark to their enemies. This doctrine is full of light to every penitent but full of darkness and terror to every man who goes on in his sins. This doctrine will be the Heaven of Heavens or the Hell of Hells: the recollection that the Son was given to rescue perishing and sinful man and yet to remember that they are excluded from this great salvation this will be the Worm at the root - this the fire that will never end. This will be the greatest curse or highest glory that Jesus Christ came into the world. We hold the balance in our own hands "Man is the maker of immortal man." today if you hear his voice harden not your hearts. Follow the path marked out resplendent with the footsteps of the Saviour till you enter heaven. God grant us this grace. May we all be interested in the gift of his Son that bye and bye we may share that everlasting life which Jesus Christ has purchased.

Amen.

SERMON V

Micah 5: 2-4 "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."

The application of the prophecy to Jesus has this circumstance, that it was made, not by Christians but by Jews, and by Jews at a period when no prejudice for or against the claims of Jesus could exist in their minds, when he was but an infant and consequently had attracted no public notice at Jerusalem.

The circumstances under which this prophecy was so publicly explained, exhibit a wonderful providence. Wise men from the East came inquiring for the King of the Jews. Herod the King is alarmed; all Jerusalem is moved - The chiefs of the Jewish nation are assembled, the most learned in the law and the prophets of history. The question is publicly put to them, where the expected Christ should be born; and they as publicly reply in Bethlehem of Judah and quote this passage in confirmation. Thus to this small and obscure town was public attention turned; and thus were the followers of Jesus able to point to the fact of his birth there as one of the many eminent accomplishments in him of the ancient prophecies and which taken together most unequivocally point him out to all the world as the servant of God, the hope of the patriarchs, the end of the law, and the Redeemer of the world. To several of the points in this important and comprehensive prophecy, which commences at the first and ranges onward through intermediate ages until the accomplishment of all his redeeming purposes, we shall direct your attention. (It calls our attention to the personal and the official character of our Lord and to the great merits of his administration.)

I. The first particular is the personal character of him to whom all these great offices are assigned. He is man. He was to come forth from Bethlehem, or in other words, he was to be born there; this sufficiently marks his humanity; but we have more than this. His being did not commence when he was born at Bethlehem; but his goings forth were from old, from everlasting, or as the margin has it, from the days of eternity. This marks his absolute divinity; because it marks his eternal generation -- his being begotten of the Father before the worlds.

of the same substance with the Father, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, and, therefore, the eternal streaming forth of his glory and the express image of his person.

This not only lays down the deity of our Lord but restricts the accomplishment of this prediction to him alone. Many come forth from Bethlehem; but one, whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity. This belongs only to Jesus. No one beside ever professed it; to one both man and the Son of God could never be verified of any other. The former no one doubts; the latter he testified before Pilate. Thus then we may proceed on this safe and immovable ground that the prophecy belongs only to Jesus, and that he to whom it belongs is very God.

II. We have his official character; he is a ruler. Consider this as implying the exercise of authority. "He shall come forth to me that is to be ruler in Israel." If Jesus Christ answers to this prophecy, we must see him not only as a moral teacher, not merely as a reproving prophet; and as a bright example of the truths taught by him; but as exercising an authority which answers to the prophetic declaration "He who is to be ruler in Israel."
This also we find exemplified in several striking and unequivocal particulars. Royal acts 1. to give law 2. to repeal law 3. to execute law.

1. He gave law - found it (perverted) by false comments, and he returned it to its original meaning - leaving no appeal; adding a new commandment - and issuing other commands under penalty of death. In all this the air and manner in which he spoke distinguishes him from any other prophet and shows him to be king as well as prophet. He drops the usual "Thus saith the Lord;" and knowing he himself was the Lord, he proclaims his will, "but I say unto you etc." - (instance from Sermon on the mount) Thus he was ruler in Israel.
He takes up the law as his own law; and by virtue of an inherent right, he explains and enlarges it, and inserts the explanation with the authority of the original revelation. The people felt this peculiarity in the manner of our Lord and acknowledged that he taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

2. Another of his regal acts was to abolish law. Thus he abolished the law of ceremonies, and brought to an end the whole ancient sacrificial and typical system.

It is true that he says, "Think not that I am come to destroy etc;" but the whole context shows what law he meant. He makes no mention of sacrifices; he neither recommends nor prohibits them; he takes no care to correct any erroneous notions which might have crept in respecting them.

He speaks therefore of the moral part of the Mosaic institutes, and of that only.
For the law of ceremonies and sacrifices he brought that to an end, ancient as it was, even patriarchal, carefully as it had been guarded and minutely as it had been prescribed, he abrogated the whole. To the woman of Samaria, "The hour is coming and now is." - The Passover, one of the most solemn commerations, he changed for his own ordinance. On the cross

he cancelled the law of ordinances, fulfilled every type and deprived it, therefore, of meaning - and sent forth his servants to teach that circumcision itself was nothing etc.

Thus by a royal act he abolished these most sacred ordinances. They passed away as the shadows of night, when he appeared in the effulgence of his own peculiar, and exclusive priesthood. Thus he fulfilled another prophetic word, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not." Another Temple was opened, the Temple of heaven; other blood was sacrificially poured, his own blood, - another priesthood not of Aaron but of Melchezedec. Here were acts of decided and eminent royal authority.

3. He executed law - was of a terrible kind - Destruction of Jerusalem and dispersion of the Jews. (Enlarge and show that this is as much his display of power and offended majesty as second coming to judgment with which it is blended in his prophecy of the event Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power with great glory etc. "How often would I have gathered them" - then destruction came - and as in the text the survivers he "gave up" - aweful words -

But we have also the exercise of his royal power in mercy, "He shall stand and feed."
Office of a king often compared to that of a shepherd, and to this the allusion in the text at once so beautiful and expressive is made. Behold then the divine savior in another office. He lays aside all that is aweful in majesty, and fulfills the words of another prophecy to the utmost emphasis of its tender and affecting language, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently bear those that are with young." This is his office; but who then are his flock, and what then are their states? This question answered by himself. The Jews were his flock, and they were in a lost condition. He calls them therefore the lost sheep of the House of Israel. All the gentile nations were his flock, for though in his personal ministry he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, yet he says, "And other sheep I have who are not of this fold, them must I bring etc." They too were lost and needed his bringing into the ample fold which he had provided for all. His sheep are all mankind, and all like sheep have gone astray. Under these circumstances he began his ministry - little flock gathered and safely folded was the first fruits. Then his under shepherds were sent forth, and every convert made to his religion was represented as a strayed sheep found and brought back. "Ye were," says St. Peter to the Christians to whom he wrote," ye were as sheep going astray; but ye are now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls."

Ever since the first gathering of souls of Christ, therefore, the world may be divided into the sheep in the fold and the sheep out of it: those who have returned to the shepherd and those who are still wandering. Let us consider the case of both and the office of Christ respecting both, and the contrast will be such as may well excite in us the liveliest gratitude towards God, for our own happy condition and pity to those who are still without.

1. This fold is the church. But what is it to be in the church of God? The commonness of our privileges is apt to blunt our sense of their value; yet can we conceive of a state so privileged as our own? To us the word is admonishing; we go up with the multitude of them that keep Holy Day. To us the watchful care of ministers is extended; we have the support and prayers of the pious. To us is given the holy Sacraments, one which gives us rights to all the privileges of saints, the other which renews our faith and is the life of our souls. Above all as we are Christ's, we are his people, and he rejoices in us as his property, as the sheep he found in the wilderness and brought home rejoicing.

2. As sheep in the fold and under the special charge of Jesus, behold our supply. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want," says David and then transports us to a pasture scene of rich supply and unbroken quiet. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures etc." Precisely under the same views our Lord represents his own ministry to his people. He sendeth them forth, and they go in and out and find pasture. What are our supplies? Supplies of knowledge. Supplies of strength - they that wait upon the Lord - Supplies of spiritual blessing - Fulness in him - blessed be God who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing and Lord rich to all that call upon him.

3. Mark the care and attention indicated in this offer of our Lord. The love of Christ to his people is one surpassing all our thoughts; and, therefore, our suspicions of it are injurious and unworthy. How are we to measure it? By the circumstance that we are creatures? Even that might elevate our thoughts - man his greatest work - forsake not the work of thy own hands might be our prayer, and our argument in prayer, and it would have weight - yet not by this. That we have been preserved and dealt kindly with, and that he has suffered us long? These are proofs of love: and yet not by these. But by this, hear it unbelief and fly, hear it doubting tremulous spirit, and lift up thy head, "I lay down my life for the sheep." This it is which makes the love of Christ to surpass knowledge, and this we may interpret as promise of his care. Behold then the exemplifications of it. His care is constant. He is ever with them; he leads them forth and brings them in. He that keepeth them will not slumber. Behold he that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. "Lo I am with you," was enough for the Apostles though they were to go to prison and to death. See how it supported St. Paul, "At my first answering no one stood by me, but the Lord was with me." This we are to realize, and by faith in it we shall live. His care is tender and discriminating - Are you young in years or in grace? He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom. Are you burthened with cares and sorrows? What tenderness, he is gently leading them that are with young; he is mindful of your weakness and infirmities.

Many past ages show the wonderful attention to the states of his people. He was indeed a wicked servant who said, "I knew thou wert a hard master -" What! When he has said, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, when he condescended

to the natural incredulity of Thomas, when in the depths of his own suffering he could say of his disciples, "The spirit is willing and the flesh weak." What, when after reproving the seven Asiatic churches, he adds all the commendation the case would admit, "Nevertheless thou hast a few names even in Sardis." How many other instances might we add to show the tenderness of the Shepherd, and the love he bears to the flock.
His care is effectual. "I come that they might have life," and he gives it. And more abundantly he increases it, "And they shall never perish, nor shall any pluck them out of my hand," alluding to troops of robbers, "The sheep in the fold and under the care of the Shepherd perish not," no power shall injure them illustrate when walking through the valley of the shadow of death, great dangers and "thy rod and staff comfort me," give me full and tranquilling confidence - I go in unto him eternal.

Now does all this excite your joy and gratitude; consider then and pity the sheep which are out of the fold - in the wilderness. They are out of the fold, out of the church, and what does this imply? They are not his people, and he is not their God, not in the covenant which declares, I will be merciful and hear the aweful words of the Apostle Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel - strangers to the covenant etc. No assembly like this invites their footsteps. They assemble to pray to Gods that cannot hear, by worship they are the more inflamed to sin, and contact with each other conveys only some new form of disease and corruption becomes more corrupt.

No cheerful song of praise like ours exhilarating, sanctifying, rises from their lips. The very sounds they utter characterize their objects of worship and their feelings discordant, barbarous, savage, "hissing," says Buchanan, "as though the serpent had inspired their very voice and proved him coiled about their very hearts."

No shepherd gathers their lambs into his bosom. Their children are not brought by baptism and faith and prayer to Jesus that he may lay his hands upon them and bless them. Their young people cannot say, "My Father thou art the guide of my youth." Those heavy with trouble and can have no one gently to lead them; there is no throne of grace where they find mercy and find grace to help in times of need which happens as frequently to them as to us.

They have left their pasture, no supply, no knowledge which feeds, no pardon which cheers and strengthens them, no spiritual blessing by which they grow in hallowed habits and conformity to God. In a word they are lost - sheep finds not its way back - nor they - never did until found by Him and brought back - all their history in proof of this. Thus they wander further and further, whilst every beast of the field preys upon them. Thus they live, and alas thus they die, a dark futurity secures them at which they shudder but from which they cannot flee. - -

But even them he shall bring back and feed. As he gathered the sheep of ancient Europe and Asia, so he is now sending forth his shepherds, and already many a pagan can join with us in holy gratitude and say, "We were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to etc."

III. Manner of his administration - in strength and majesty. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

The office is to be fulfilled in strength and majesty -- Behold then how both are united.

APPENDIX B[1]

LETTERS

To the Chairman of the New South Wales District

77 Hatton Garden
September 15, 1832

My Dear Brother

On Mr. Erskin's services and censurable case, you will find with this a separate communication. To the other particulars in your District Minutes, we have to reply as follows.

Although at present we are not in circumstances to increase the number of missionaries in either of the colonies, and may indeed hesitate to expend more money where so much has been applied in vain, yet as we have full confidence in your management, it is permitted you to hire Mr. Leach as a local preacher, and to report on his case at your next District His age will operate against his being received as a regular Missionary but as an Assistant Missionary it may then be considered.

We can say nothing as to Mr. Welland at present; and even you only propose to take the matter into your consideration at your next District. This case therefore does not at present appear before us.

We commend your intention to proceed to the work of a satisfactory settlement of the Chapels and other Mission property. This we urge upon you to bring to a satisfactory conclusion; being as careful as possible in selecting for Trustees those only whose views and principles are in accordance with our own; and taking care that the Settlement be upon our sanctioned plan.

As to Kiping-point Chapel, there is no probability, that the Committee will be able to make any grant, so that if anything be done subscriptions must be raised in the colony itself.

As to Supernumeraries, the proceedings with regard to Mr. Erskin show that the District is uninformed as to our

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1 These letters, Watson's last official acts for missions, were found among papers now in the possession of the Methodist Missionary Society. To Miss Irene Longstaff, archivist of the Missionary Society, belongs a word of thanks for her help and permission which made possible their inclusion in this study.

usages. The practice abroad is the same as at home, when missionaries so settle. They become entitled, (where there is no moral objection) to the legalized allowance which is paid in advance from the Conference at which they are made Supernumerary. This a Chairman of a foreign District may advance at the time it would be paid if the Supernumerary were in England. He may also advance for him the regular allowance for furniture £20, and as the Committee usually when it is <u>really needed</u> takes the plan of the auxiliary Fund, and allows something annually in addition to the legalized Fund the Chairman may conditionally anticipate this help, at the rate of £30 per annum, but must wait the decision of the Committee as to its being continued, or allowed up to that extent.

Mr. Leigh's thoughtless and extreme grant charges have been disallowed. The District acted properly in expressing its disapprobation of them, but the true providing in such cases, is for the District itself expressly to disallow them, and leave the applicant if he chooses to appeal to the Committee otherwise you will perceive that money gets advanced and a difficulty in many cases arises in recovering it. This rule you will be kind enough to keep in memory, although we hope that no such culpable follies will again occur among you.

Your request for the appointment of a Missionary for Bathurst will be considered when we receive the report of your visit, but we decline Hunter's river. When the distracted affairs of New South Wales are satisfactorily settled, as we trust by God's blessings they will be under your prudent management, and when we see the length and breadth of our expenditure there, and the old stations are put into working condition, which we fear they never have been we may then take into consideration the enlargement of the work. We wish therefore to impress it upon you, that your <u>present cares</u> must rather be directed to arrange, consolidate, and revive the Mission than to extend it. Launceston too must be <u>visited</u>, but cannot yet have a preacher.

This you will communicate to the Brethren in Van Diemen's Land. Port Arthur we shall bring before the Committee at its next sitting. Mr. Turner's losses will also be referred and we shall probably write him by this conveyance.

Your taking the business out of the hands of a Clerk we entirely approve. Many of the brethren labour much more in our temporal matters than can be required from any brother abroad and never think of obtaining at the charge of the funds they manage any such assistance. Your very proper regulation as to Furniture must be carried into effect.

On the subject of allowances we reply. That your application for an advance of that for Education appears reasonable, on the ground you state, the high charges of Schools on the Colony. The advance for Fuel and Water is also allowed in such places where the scarcity and consequent dearness renders it <u>necessary</u> which necessity is to be judged of by the District year by year.

As to Board the Brethren appear to be under a mistake. At home we never suppose that our Board allowance covers the expense of living; but we reckon one thing with another, and

with economy make the allowances sufficient. Now as we have endeavoured to place you on a par with ourselves all the circumstances of your Station being taken into account you must show that upon the whole there is some necessity for advance, before we can make any alteration.

As to washing too, there is a similar mistake. We in London have no allowance under that head, or for that purpose.

We are happy to observe that in your District Meeting the very necessary enquiries were made by you as to the real state of the work and the means of reviving it. It is rendered very melancholy to reflect that New South Wales should have been the most unproductive of our Stations, although so much has been expended upon it and it is now so old a Mission; and the more so since this has been in no small degree the result of ministerial unfaithfulness, secularity, and neglect among several of the agents sent out and from whom better things were expected. The time passed we trust has sufficed as to these painful occurrences, and the Brethren under your experienced care will now address themselves to their great work in the true spirit of Methodist Preachers, and Missionaries. May the blessed spirit give efficiency to your exertions to raise up a living church to show forth the honours of his name, amidst a perverse people. After all it appears that in point of fact there is no Society except in Sydney and Paramatta! Still your reports state that a few in those places are alive to God, and waiting for the effusion of his Spirit. In this faithful remnant you will have co-operation, and if our whole system be vigorously put into action and persevered in with true dependence upon God, there is the same reason to hope for growing influential Societies in New South Wales as in other places. The places which have been most unproductive have probably sunk into their present state for want of attention; but if any should be hopelessly barren turn to those which may better repay you. This was Mr. Wesley's rule.

The Schools you have will prove important to you if kept under good management. They must never be allowed to pass out of your direction, and the way to get influence over them, is for the Brethren to pay them attention. See that our Catechisms are regularly used, and sometimes catechise yourselves.

You have acted prudently in not transmitting Hutchinson's prejudiced statement of the Hobart Town Society without remark and correction. There are however a few persons on that Station somewhat difficult to manage, and you will do well to maintain a regular correspondence with Brother Turner.

We feel with you, that you have entered in some respects upon a discouraging and unpleasant sphere of labour; but to set in order what is out of place and to supply what is wanting, is often a part of the work assigned us. Take it up then as a part of the service your Master requires, and when we act from love to him, hard things will become easy.

I am
my Dear Brother
Yours affectionately
Rd Watson

To the Chairman of the Bahama District

77 Hatton Garden, London
September 26, 1832

Dear Brother

On several of your stations the work appears both steady and growing and the Report satisfactory. For this we rejoice with you, and give thanks to God. Those which present a different aspect will call for a strict investigation at your next meeting and mutual endeavors among the Brethren to give the best counsel to those appointed to them and to aid them in the revival of the work. This is one of the most important cares of a District Meeting, and if those annual assemblies are made a means of grace to the brethren themselves, and the case of every languishing station is carefully and prayerfully taken up, with earnest longings of soul, that the whole field of the District may become fruitful and hopeful. God will bless your efforts, as he has done the similar exertions of others.

In order to this, let great unity of spirit be cultivated by the Brethren. In this some of you have fallen into a snare; but let the past suffice. In the magnanimity of true Christianity bury all past bickerings, and each show an example to the Church and the world of meekness, humility, temper, and charity. Let both, you and us, often try our religion by the same standard we set up for others namely St. Paul's description of Charity and then we shall if open to conviction, never become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

In the answer to the question respecting the frequency of preaching the report on two stations is 3 to 6 and on a third is 3 to 5 times. This is very vague, please make the entry more explicit. We are glad to see the return of your Catechetical meetings. These may be made very useful.

In reply to your letter dated Bermuda July 26 respecting the missing £10 you are directed to pay it to the friends of Mr. Thompson out of the Committees grant for the year. At the same time the Committee greatly blame the careless unbusiness like conduct of those concerned which to say nothing of its leading to suspicions of an unpleasant kind shows a want of due orderly attention to your affairs. Since this passed the Committee we have received the letter I have transmitted herewith, from Mr. Brownell. From this the matter above mentioned assumes a serious moral form, and we send you the letter that at the District Meeting the £10 affair and the other referred to in it may receive a full answer, and satisfactory explanation, if it can be given, when we shall confront yours with Mr. Brownell's testimony and proceed accordingly, and that we must proceed seriously against somebody is I am afraid inevitable.

I am
Yours truly
Rd Watson

To the Chairman of the Antigua District

London
October 19, 1832

Dear Brother

In reply to your District Minutes, the first subject which strikes us is the painful decrease in your numbers on all your stations but two. This is a consideration which we trust has led to faithful examination in the District for although various reasons may be given tending to satisfy the minds of Brethren when the subject is considered generally, it is most important to be sure, by looking well, in such a meeting into the conduct of every Brother, his spirit and his labours, that you are all clear in this matter. This is done in our English Districts and we trust it is not omitted among you. If the result from that every effort has been made in the persevering spirit of piety and prayer, and, when one means has proved ineffectual that others equally provided for by our system have been put into operation; then will the same satisfaction arise as from self examination when the result is, that we are conscious that we have not willfully departed from the commandment of his lips. We do not however make these remarks as the result of suspicion; yet if anything exists which occasions an obstruction to your success it ought surely to be brought under your view. Are we diligent? Do we preach pointedly, faithfully, experimentally, affectionately? Do we pray with earnestness for success? Do ye stir up our people to all diligence? Do we both superintend and impel the whole machine of our system? Do we exercise pastoral care, in the pastoral spirit? Are these and other enquiries if made in the spirit of fidelity or always appropriate, and may in many cases be specially necessary.

We are sorry to hear from your reply to a passage in the last Circular that you have no prospect of Native help in your District. Does not this prove something wrong in former years? Missions so old ought to have created this kind of agency notwithstanding all allowance to be made for the state of Society. Your attention is now however directed to the subject and you will cordially enter into it. The way to promote this object is to encourage the exercise of those gifts in pious young men, in prayer and exhortation and for the Preachers to recommend to them suitable books and take a fostering oversight of them in the Lord. On this point let no one despair.

We fear from the answer to 2.32, that you are indeed suffering for want of more strength. Still the object must sacredly be kept in view as far as human strength and mighty zeal will allow. Speak at least to as many members as possible in delivering their tickets that you may be satisfied of their state and adopt advice to it. This is a high branch of our duty every where. It will be attended with great good if you take pains with the leaders to improve them when they meet your meetings by very plainly and frequently stating our views on the great steps and stages of experimental religion and by exciting them to attend to their own piety. This is an old and good practice in the West

Indies and we exhort you to persevere in it where it exists and to revive it where it has been laid aside.

Under Q 30 you complain that our measures of retrenchment have impeded the work. You may be sure that we act only from necessity; but all that can follow is, that for a time the extension of the work into new places may be prevented but you have surely the means of enlarging and spreading it under the Divine Blessing where you already labour. The prosperity of a Mission is not always in the multiplication of Stations but in the <u>well working</u> of those occupied, that their influence may be spreading everywhere. In this subject of complaint however you see your want of more subordinate agents and have a motive to encourage them. At the same time we shall help you all our Funds will allow by increasing your number; but your hopes must not in this respect extend too far. The West Indian Missions ought to have a principle of regular growth and progress in themselves, and not be dependent <u>wholly</u> upon their being pushed forward by external help in the same degree as formerly. Did you ever try the plan of engaging those members of society who can read to collect little companies, though but a few to whom they may read the Testament and Tracts -- could not much be done in this way, upon a system the working of which might be so easily superintended by you as to cost you little additional labour. On estates a pious slave who can read might thus be made useful if furnished with Books.

On the Schoolmaster and Mistress for the liberated Africans, there has been some misapprehension. Mr. James has written the Chairman on the subject. We want to hear what you recommend after you know the state of the case.

We approve of the conduct of the District in Mr. Woolby's case. Upon the review of the whole the Conference thought it best to set him down finally as a Supernumerary.

We now bring before you what we have determined on various points contained in your minutes or arising out of them.

(Insert from the Financial Minutes see September 12th and October 10th, 1832)

The District being at issue with us on some particular entries in the accounts, Mr. Buggs will write you on the subject.

I am
My Dear Brother
Yours affectionately
Rd Watson

To the Chairman of the Madras District

Hatton Garden
October 20, 1832

Dear Brother

As to Mr. Percival's future station we have to state that though the matter is not yet decided the circumstances of his health and family being on one hand considered and on the other the large expense already brought upon the Fund, will probably induce the Committee to decide, that instead of his returning home he should be appointed to the North of Ceylon where Mrs. Percival may rejoin him. However on this Brother Percival will have direct information.

As the attention of the Brethren to the erection of suitable Chapels is highly commendable when accompanied with suitable exertions to raise the expense on the spot as far as possible, in which your District has justly distinguished itself, so the anxiety ought to be proportionate to prevent the future loss of this sacred property to the Mission from non or fallacious settlement. Your attention is drawn to this, and you have noted it in your Minutes in a way which shows the interest you feel in the subject, and we have now only to request you to follow out this matter to completion.

On exempting the Brethren from English work, and setting them at liberty to pay full attention to the native population it is indeed a matter of surprize that with the instructions all the Brethren have had, the very impressions they must have carried out as to the views of the Committee, and the observations which must have fallen from the Secretaries in their correspondence, this question should be put before us in the way of a request that a plan may be altered was never intended to exist, and which has grown up it would seem under the eye and hand of some who as to its real character have kept the Committee very much in the dark.

The leading character of our Missions in India were always most explicitly understood to be, Missions to the Heathen, and whatever has rendered them but secondarily instead of being primarily so, is in opposition to all our intentions and hopes, and we think with you sufficiently explains the want of greater success after so many years. You mention the letters we wrote to our Brethren in Calcutta and which appear to have been read at your meeting. These letters embodied our ordinary and constant views; but we wrote out more explicitly, because for sometime a truth which we were slow to learn had been stealing upon us both as to several Missions in Ceylon as well as Continental India; and which various circumstances particularly the slow progress of native conversion led us to suspect. Naturally also we are too fond to be pleased with our Brethren and their work, and to make the best of all.

Still there is a danger of running into extremes and we must understand each other.

1. The great object of your Mission is the native population.

2. This supposes that you will give all, or at least

the main portion of your time to it, so that it is in fact the great object of your public, and private labours. Here we are agreed but then

3. We have never deemed it inconsistent with this, that an English service should be held at any station where there was a necessity for it arising out of the destitution of the means, or the number of English, or the exertion of members of our society disposed again to unite. This indeed we have thought might conduce to the native work, if kept in its proper place, and in some instances has done so. Nor do we see that holding a service or two a week of this kind, should in the least incapacitate a Brother for his native work. It can require in the simple unostentatious form which we mean little mental preparation, little length the reading of a litergy, a short sermon and with simplicity and fervour with meeting an English class once a week, or seeing that it is met and setting the English members to be useful in some way. Now where this is <u>needed</u> and therefore called for by that necessity, it is no great abstraction from a Brother's labours in the proper native work, if indeed he be a working man; that is not that he performs one vast days work now and then; but is entirely and properly "at it, and always at it."

4. We may further add if a Station be of so important a character as an English one that one man's full service or nearly so in that department would be necessary to give it efficiency it ought to be provided for by a special appointment, upon special application to the Committee, so that no strength shall be taken from the native work. That it may be desirable to have a very few such stations, in Ceylon and India, is probable, but generally the rule should be, not to push any of them into importance as English Stations; but to admit the pressure of circumstances to have its due consideration as they arise. For that there should be no places for English preaching and no English Schools is surely not desirable.

In these things I suppose also we are agreed, and also finally in this great rule, that every Brother should give himself to the native work, acquiring the language, getting among the poor, visiting their villages till he gets their confidence and thus by the use of every means to spread without ostentation but with hope because in the spirit of our calling which is at once <u>great</u> and <u>simple</u> the influence of our divine Redeemer.

The Societies begin to complain that their India Missions are not sufficiently <u>native</u>. There is reason in it. A Missionary making his rounds among the poor and in the villages around his station reading, conversing, overlooking a school, praying <u>for</u> when he cannot pray <u>with</u> and persevering until he begins to make impression, takes a much truer position than he who confines himself or nearly so to the stated services of a Chapel in any language and it is only those who really surrender themselves to their true work who will long be tolerated.

You ask us to legislate as to the English and Native Preaching. As a local District you ought rather to have suggested what might be proper for us to sanction, for we must be much in the dark as to the means how a false system may be

restrained. Let the Madras Brethren then meet and prepare some tangible change in the present plan with the reasons and the bearings of it and we shall understand their meaning. We are indeed surprized that as they knew our general views nothing but what is vague and general on this important subject appears in the Minutes. Surely it is for you to address yourselves to the practical adjustment of the matter. Take Station by Station and ask whether the fault is found here or there and to what extent and how it can be remedied, whether by immediate or gradual process and on what plan you think the station ought to be worked.

Let this be done without delay, and send us the result in particulars not in general.

Your suggested plan for the support and training of a few native youths as Catechists, is a very good one. We sanctioned the principle at Colombo but that failed from grasping too much. We are disposed to encourage the project provided,

1. That it is kept on a very moderate scale for the present.
2. That we see and approve the plan - which must be at once simple and guarded.
3. That there is every prospect of support being raised toward it on the spot.

As to your Library Project

1. We approve of a collection of those books being made which have been or may be put into the hands of the Brethren for the purpose of learning the native languages of your District and of those which have been purchased for the Mission generally with the same design. This is but just to the Fund, and paying proper regards to future students.

2. Of course we approve also of such translations from English Books as shall be necessary to instruct the natives in pure Christianity; but the works to be thus translated, the means of meeting the expense, and the number to be printed ought to be decided upon at each District, and the whole laid before the Committee for its approval and to say what part of the expense it will itself provide.

But we should object to such an institution being made the instrument of circulating controversial subjects on our peculiar views thinking that no call can exist among the natives for such a measure at present and that we best spread our own views of truth when we state them fully, and on the authority of the Holy Scriptures and not polemically.

On Brother England's case certainly every District Meeting, or the Chairman of every District when the District is not assembled has the right to know how any Mission property is settled and every Brother who does not by producing writing when necessary or by other means give full information of every kind, renders himself liable to be put on trial, and will undoubtedly be so dealt with.

Since I wrote the early part of this letter, the Committee have decided to give up Calcutta, and to remove Mr. Percival to Point Pedro, and Mr. Hodson to Bangalore which we suppose will be vacant by Mr. England's return. (See Finance Minutes of 19th October 1832)

I am
Dear Brother
Yours affectionately, Rd. Watson

To the Chairman of the Tamul District Ceylon

London
October 23, 1832

My Dear Brother

To the proposal in your District Minutes to make Point Pedro a separate Station, we have acceded and have appointed Brother Percival to it with reference to his own and Mrs. Percival's health.

The answer to the 17th question is a very strange one. Surely if you have no translation into Tamul or Portuguese, you ought to read the Rules frequently into these languages for the information of the members of your Societies who know those languages only, a work which cannot be of any labour, and which would meet the spirit of our regulation.

Your account of the weekly labours of the Brethren is defective through a bare answer to the question. It is customary for the Brethren in other Districts to state what other public engagements they attend to besides merely preaching. We do not suspect you of inattention to any part of duty, but we wish that your Minutes should be a record of those diligent labours in which you no doubt delight.

When it is inquired in a District Meeting Can any measure be adopted for the promotion of the work of God etc. it is now become an excellent practice to read solemnly the Liverpool resolutions as enjoined upon us at home. This is to be done in addition to the consideration of all other subjects which so important a question will suggest. Indeed a District Meeting is regarded under a law view when it is considered as a meeting for the mere transaction of business though it be the business of the Church; it ought to be, and we trust generally is, a meeting for solemn prayer for brotherly exhortation and examination of each other, and for mutual endeavors to throw light upon the path of duty, and to incite each other to persevere in it and we know of nothing better adapted to promote these effects than the Resolutions aforesaid.

Mr. Roberts has had long before this his leave of return tho' it could not have arrived previously to the time of the holding of your District.

We are greatly distressed at the disputes which have existed between two of the Brethren. These things ought not so to be, and there is fault some where. Let each examine himself be open to conviction, and pray for those deeper baptisms of God's Holy Spirit which shall transform all that is earthly into what is spiritual and holy. As Brother Roberts is returning and Brother Grange will be appointed to the Madras District we do not think it necessary to investigate these petty quarrels for such they are; but we leave everyone to begin anew to forgive the things behind and reach to those before to lay aside every weight and to run the noblest of races in a noble spirit of zeal, self denial, and charity. At your next meeting in September Mr. George will remove to the Madras District to take the place of Mr. Cryer who will be appointed to you. We shall write to this effect to Mr. Carver the Chairman of the Madras District.

As we understand there is now an easy conveyance between the North and South of Ceylon, it will be well, as your District is small, to invite the Chairman or a Senior from the South, to assist you at your annual District Meetings.

We beseech you dear Brethren to give yourselves up to the work of seeking the heathen. Is there not some fault in your system of proceeding here? Do you visit their houses, and villages, do you do this in a persevering plan? Surely we ought to be trying all means. "Sowing beside all waters" where the work has been so long established and has produced so little. More pains too may be taken probably with the half casts; spiritual pains, and practiced visiting would surely have greater effect. We unite our prayers with yours that you may see a great revival of God's work and if you expect it, and put yourselves to renewed efforts in preparation for it you will not be disappointed.

The following are Extracts from the Minutes of the Financial Committee (The Financial Minutes of October 31st 1832)

With love to the Brethren
I am Dr Brother
Yours very Affecly
Rd Watson

To the Chairman of the St. Vincents District

(October or November 1832)

My Dear Brother

The absence of Mr. Rayner from your Meeting is properly considered. The case however must I presume in all its parts be settled by us, and therefore the charges are gone out to Mr. Rayner. At the same time we may observe, that the very reading of them (as I presume you did in the Meeting) may teach the Brethren some important lessons as 1, That if a Brother in office wish to keep influence over his colleagues and others, he must himself be an example of diligence, temper, and devotedness to his work otherwise office alone will not support any man. 2, That the younger men when they once give place to the litigious insubmissive and querulous spirit will often fall largely into the temptation of indulging it. What a monstrous list of charges for its length is that of Brother Grieves? How many sick people might he have visited whilst writing them? Surely he might have preached all the extra sermons which he complains Mr. Rayner laid upon him in half the time that he has spent upon the complaint itself, and have had God's blessing with them too, which I fear did not attend the penning of so many trifling complaints mixed up I grant with some graver ones which will be attended to; but one half of which proceed from ignorance of the very Rules to which he appeals, the other some to what a witty Divine refers most Church disputes, that "Billy the baby has broken Billy the baby's doll." 3, That these are matters which call for deep humiliation. It is a down right and bitter reflection upon us to see such petty silly quarrels arising up which destroy all good feeling and usefulness. Surely where there is a cause of complaint which mutual or affectionate explanation cannot settle; no body need go into a bad temper about it. One Brother has only calmly to say to another, I feel it right to lay this matter before the District or the Committee; and we must both abide by their decision. Cannot this be done without breaking the sacred bond of charity, if the matter be trifling or of kind nity for the offender if the charge be serious? It surely may and ought, or every such Brother ought to throw up his commission.

On the face of this case there are great faults on both sides. On one a secularity arising out of getting too much immersed in building etc. and not keeping up the spirit of the ministry, a thing to be well guarded against; on the other a great parade about "study" and "sermonizing" and "literary persuits" with scraps of Latin foolishly protruded as though it were not just as bad in Missionaries to affect being literary men, and being ambitious to make sermons to "smell of the lamp" which Brother G. seems to consider a great excellence as to be immersed too deeply in bricks and "lumber." Unitedly pray that the true spirits of devoted servants of Christ, governing themselves, that they may govern the Church, and walking in the light that they may give light, may rest upon you all. Let your District Meetings be made the means not only of settling

your affairs; but of stirring each other up to love and good works. I trust they are; but these sad occurrences which make us bow down our heads call upon all the brethren to support their Chairman in making them still more decidedly.

There is a melancholy decrease in the numbers of several of the Stations. We trust that this matter as to its causes has been well scrutinized; but your minutes are defective in not stating that you had investigated this with great faithfulness on every station where it occurs, to ascertain that every means had been employed to promote the work by the Brethren. This we do in our best conducted Districts at home that in every case of this kind the real cause of the decline of any station may be brought before us.

You properly express your dissatisfaction with the slovenly state of the Demerara Accounts. This we shall take up among other matters between us and Mr. Rayner.

On Brother Fletcher's return he has heard from us. We are glad to observe that you appear cheerfully to respond to our views as to a Native Ministry because we perceive in the Antigua District that subject has been met by the language of despair. But to this issue the work must gradually approximate in the West Indies, and as our system is admirably adapted to promote it, we trust that with united prudence and affection, the Brethren will encourage promising young men in the exercise of their talents and lend them useful books. The plan of engaging those who do not exhort or preach, to read the New Testament and useful Tracts and pray, or even read when they do not, yet pray in public to little companies in houses, etc., is in some places attended with a great blessing. This on a regular system and that without much trouble to the Brethren as for instance a meeting once a fortnight to hear their reports, and arrange a plan of operation, might in some places be undertaken. Let this be considered and give us your opinion.

On the effect produced as you say by the Conference resolutions against slavery we remark

1, That the public feeling of this country against interminable slavery, and the conscience of our body, represented by the Conference, cannot and ought not to be fettered by any inconvenience which may arise in the Colonies to our Missions.

2, That your being bound as Missionaries to keep silence on merely civil affairs in the Colonies, was never designed to influence your private views, which as you are lovers of truth, justice, and mercy (or you would be unworthy Ministers) can never be indifferent to the just claims of oppressed men, much less in favour of a moral offence against the love of our neighbour.

3, That if any of you have entangled yourselves by blinking the question in your conversation with planters etc. or giving any countenance to the notion that Christianity is not incompatible with a state of hopeless slavery, you alone have to thank yourselves. Some of the brethren have done this. We hope none of you.

4, That it is enough for you to say and profess it in private conversation the subject is forced upon you by any one interested in the system; that you simply and exclusively teach

Christianity to the slaves but that if you are pressed for your private opinions, that they are in favour of the intentions of Government and Parliament to adopt safe and just measures for the abolition of the system entirely, as best for all parties, if properly effected. Of that opinion you ought never to be ashamed, though you are not called to obtrude it unnecessarily.

5. That the loss of local aid afforded to your Missions on this account will be we hope but temporary yet we can never purchase patronage at the expense of principle. The Committee will indeed do all they can as to your grants with reference to this; but they are prepared for the result, that possibly some of the Missions may for a time be cramped; because our grants may not be equal to the diminution of local support. At the same time we shall do all that our funds will allow but this may be so inadequate, that the utmost economy on the part of the Brethren, and the utmost exertions to raise supplies on the Stations as far as prudence will allow, will both be necessary. And we have a better opinion of the Brethren than to think that they will murmur at any inconveniences which may arise in consequence of a struggle on which depends so many great interests of their slave members whom they ought to love as their own souls, and which will issue in results tending to open the door to far greater usefulness.

We leave the attention of the time of the District Meeting to your prudence, only impressing it upon you that we must have your minutes at the latest by the latter end of June.

Since the above was written we heard from Brother Rayner, who proposes instead of answering the charges put back by us to him, to go to the District and have the matter fully investigated there. Now we have no objection to this, if the matter be not evaded. We therefore direct you as Chairman under the authority of the Committee especially to summon Mr. Rayner and his accusers all to be present at your next meeting, that you may go fully into the matter. If on the other hand Mr. R. has been guilty of the great neglects of ministerial duty charged upon him; if he has pressed to heavily upon his colleagues by imposing unnecessary traveling and toil upon them, let him be censured for these are great faults; and if they have complained improperly and captiously let them be censured, and the case fully reported. Mr. Rayner's accounts will demand your strict investigation and you must require that he come prepared to meet it.

As the Brethren in Demerara have agreed to keep their proceeds of money as a common fund out of which to support all the Brethren in the Colony we have no objection on this condition to the Division of the Circuit. The sum to be apportioned to each Circuit is to be from year to year determined by the District.

On the Demerara accounts which the District very properly refused to pass in the absence of the signature of one Steward and when no one was present to give any explanations, the Committee have determined that the only regular mode of proceeding is to refer them all back to the District to be minutely and in every respect investigated when the Brethren from Demerara are present, and we request the District to give their full opinion on the

whole case to be laid along with the next years accounts before the Committee. You as Chairman will communicate this to Mr. Rayner and the Demerara Brethren when you summon them to the meeting.

A number of financial particulars in your Minutes have already been replied to by Mr. James. A few particulars remain to be noticed from the Minutes of the Committee of Finance. (See Minutes of Finance October 24th 1832) This being a general regulation the cases of this kind in your Minutes will be determined by it.

I am
Yours very affectionately
Rd Watson

To the Chairman of the South Ceylon District

London
November 22, 1832

Dear Brother

In reply to your Minutes of 1831 we have generally to express our satisfaction at the indications of progress which the work presents. We are especially gratified by those lively feelings of desire for the extension of the work among the natives which several of the Brethren have manifested, and we trust that yet a great harvest will be reaped among them. In order to this it is not only necessary that the apparatus of Schools, and books should be provided; a Missionary must give himself with the affection and strength of his soul to the work; and by kind and friendly and persevering intercourse endeavour to make impression. Let us endeavour whether at home or abroad to keep up the true spirit of our work. Let us be men of one business; God's men; converted to his service and never out of it; but either directly or indirectly promoting the great objects of our ministry through all the hours of every day. It is this steady application which God chooses to bless. Fits of hot and cold neutralize each other; but if we are always speaking of God, if we always keep and diffuse our Saviour we shall be the salt which shall salt some portion of the corrupt mass around. Let us then be constantly exciting ourselves to prayer, holy resolution, affecting views of eternity; let us ask that God would shed his love more richly abroad in our hearts, and that shall entender our affections to the perishing souls of men, and lead us to watch with all the tenderness of parental affection over those whom God has already given to our or others labours, intent upon building them up, that they may obtain an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

The error of £100 mentioned under question 12, No. 1, of your Minutes has been satisfactorily explained.

The excessive charge of a wash basin will be placed to the personal account of Mr. Hunter.

The distinction between the two classes of Assistant Missionaries was not before the Finance Committee, several of whom were new members, when the alteration was proposed in the allowances. Some of us who recollect the original arrangement and its reasons having explained the case to the Committee, the matter is to be left undisturbed as it was originally.

Your plan of a substitute for the Colomba Institution we approve, subject to the judgement we may form of it when we see the expense which will appear in your next Minutes. If the Brethren who take the young men carefully train them in both knowledge and simple piety, the good will be great by the blessing of God, and let that blessing be specially sought in earnest prayer upon so important a measure as training up men to be useful to the souls of others.

We see nothing to object to in the arrangement as to the better management of Schools and as far as we can judge, much to approve. The great rule is to recollect that they are

Mission Schools, and as such must if legitimate, be made and kept always subservient to piety. We regret greatly that even in the Handian Provinces you should be obliged to employ Heathen masters. You must however do as well as you can in this respect until you can displace them. This object you must earnestly labour to accomplish that all the masters may be Christian. But we should say, that in no case is a school to be established if not under a Christian Master, except where a Missionary has opportunity to superintend it, and see that only Christian books are read, that the Catechism is learned, and can also take part himself in the Catechetical and other exercises. This we specially commend to the attention of the Brethren.

You have had, we perceive, some changes in the translation of the Liturgy. We hope that you have done it satisfactorily at last for the frequent changes of books, and the tinkerings of translations has a bad effect.

These are I believe all the points of business in your minutes which call for reply. We commend you and your work again to God. For many years you have all been preparing the field, and from a partial cultivation, could not perhaps expect more good, than has already been done; but now you ought to be looking for the springing up of much of the seed which has been sown. Pray more fervently and perseveringly for the showers of fructifying blessings and the wilderness will bloom around you with flowers and fruits of grace. The Lord hasten the time.

I am
Yours Respectfully
Rd Watson

APPENDIX C

ANTI-SLAVERY SPEECH

I can hope to add little to the arguments which have been offered and nothing to the impression which has been already made by the preceding Speakers; and I should retire after moving etc, did I not recollect that I do not stand here exactly as an individual; but as in some respect representing in this Society and in this meeting a large body of Christians, all of whom feel a deep, and even an intense interest in its success.

I might have well enough settled it with my conscience to have declined because I should have given place to some more able advocate; but being here I do not know that I and my conscience should continue on such good terms as I desire if I did not take the opportunity to bear a testimony however humble against what I consider to be the greatest spiritual and the greatest moral dishonour which humbles the generally elevated character of our native land.

I have indeed spoken of conscience, and I think Sir not without good reason, for the great subject before us is not one of expediency - not one of policy - not one of mere prudence it is - if I view it right - a question of justice - of <u>eternal</u> and <u>all commanding justice.</u>

For what Sir is the true question? Is it not, "Whether man is to retain in interminable bondage the present race of slaves, their children and children's children for ever?" Many of the advocates will boldly avow this, and others will deny it; but whether they avow or deny the matter as they usually put it amounts to much the same thing. The Jamaica Assembly for instance some ten or twelve years ago claimed that colonial slavery should be left to be put an end to by the gradual operation of Christianity as in the States of Europe. But then, unhappily to all those influences and operations of Christianity which bear against slavery and tend to hasten its destruction, they have steadily opposed themselves. They admit indeed by this that slavery and Christianity are opposed, an important admission for which we thank them. But then Sir if this be so and there be any activity at all in the principles of Christianity, they must bear down with might and force against it. So they have; but has the Jamaica House of Assembly approved of the process and encouraged it, or is it true or is it not true, that whilst they have admitted the inimicalness of Christianity and Colonial slavery, they have as much as in them lies , prevented that contact of Christianity with it, which they have told us would bring it to a safe and a satisfactory conclusion?

Let us try this fact. Christianity, no abstraction, must be found living and acting somewhere if at all. Now it has

thus been acting, but how has it been encouraged? It has demanded the rest of the Sabbath for the slaves, and it has been refused; it has demanded instruction for him, and more than 300,000 slaves remain without - It is true the overseers have been commanded to bath them, to cartwhip them six days a week and on one to bath them. That is the order of priests which Jamaica raises up for her negroes; but independent of that respectable and influential order, the order of the cart-whip, neither in Church nor out of it has any serious systematic attempt to bring Christianity to bear upon the slaves been met, with a few honourable individual exceptions, with any thing but indifference, and often with hostility. Now Sir, if on the one hand I am told, that Christianity must be left to bring slavery to an end at some future indefinite time, and yet the same persons show the utmost reluctance to allow Christianity to commence its process of abolition in any form; then, Sir, those who speak thus do as fully advocate the principle of interminable slavery as those who openly avow it. But Sir, if this be so, then I contend that no greater outrage upon the principles of common justice can be conceived than to hold the negroes of our colonies in perpetual bondage; for let men talk of their property in their hateful language as they may, morally they can never establish that claim. Liberty may be forfeited by being vanquished, but these were never the spoils of honourable conquest; it may be forfeited by crime, but that is not even alleged against them. They were kidnapped and stolen, and no more right can be established in them than in any other stolen property. Nor can any length of possession establish right in this case for the true owner is always at hand, the real claimant, the black himself laying claim to himself, so that even the common language of mankind still in defiance of slavery will call, and do call, it his own body and his own soul.

I know indeed Sir that we may be reproved for talking of the natural rights of man and I grant that they have often been most mischievously urged - Yet natural rights are real things, and I know not though in a state of society they must be regulated and restrained that any ---.

If this right then cannot be questioned, if he is free by nature, and free by the right and privilege of being born a British subject, and I take it, that freedom is as much their birthright as it is ours -- for what have they done to forfeit it? It is I repeat an act of injustice not on the part of their owners alone, for I lose sight of them, but an act of injustice on the part of the nation, to uphold, countenance, and continue a system which inflicts so gross an injustice upon a million of fellow beings, aye, and fellow subjects, aye, and many of them fellow Christians, and claims to inflict it upon millions yet unborn.

I am, therefore, Sir, an advocate for emancipation as the only return to justice; short of that we cannot even be just. I am, therefore, a member of this society not because it promises to mitigate only, but to extinguish slavery; for I hold that all attempts to mitigate slavery which do not look steadily to its abolition will fail; and the nearer that point of abolition is

brought, I am inclined also to think will be the efficacy and the rapidity of the ameliorating process.

For if the principle of either interminable slavery be admitted or the abolition be postponed to an indefinite period, I profess that I for one have no hope of any mitigating process at least in the larger colonies being effectively introduced. You may make laws in favor of the slaves but who is to execute them? Or who is to guarantee their execution? A dead letter, or nearly so they have been hitherto, and a dead letter they will for the most part remain until some plan of emancipation is adopted, some point fixed beyond which the injury shall not extend. What the limit of this is to be I am content to leave to the deliberations of the legislature; the only just rule of it is the interest of the slaves themselves, not that of their masters. But when that limit is fixed when beyond which no chain shall be dragged, it is then that a new order of things must arise, and legislation will take a new character. Till then, did even the British Parliament make the slaves Lords, better as they would be in letter, they would be little more benefited in practice than the system as it is. The principle of interminable slavery would frustrate every benevolent design, and the dew of British mercy, when it falls upon the Manchineel tree of those colonies, would be converted into acrid and tormenting poison. Prescribe as you may what the master shall do for the slaves, what violences he shall be restrained from, the man who is to seek redress is still a slave. He trembles under the lash, and he can be tormented by a thousand acts of tyranny which no law can either prohibit or avenge.

That the British public will take up this great cause in a manner more firm and spirited than it has ever yet done, I doubt not. They have pretty largely expressed their opinions, and they have been waiting for the signal from this Society to express them again, at such a time and in such a manner as may appear most likely to forward the great result. One thing is clear that neither the mitigation nor the abolition of slavery will be urged forward in the colonies, the impulse must be given at home. For years this subject has been in agitation; but it has made so little progress that scarcely anything has been effected. The punishments of the negroes are now as brutal, their wrongs of every kind with but few exceptions as aggravated as they were ten years ago. The appeal to humanity is as powerful as ever. The cartwhip still maintains its eminence as the favorite instrument of torture; so a man is degraded; parental feelings degraded, and decency violated. The remedy is in the hands ---

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To the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury, July 12, 1824.
To the Chairman of the New South Wales District, September 15, 1832.
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1 See pp. 188-190 of this thesis for a chronological list of Watson's works. Those marked * are included in The Works of the Rev. Richard Watson.

To the Chairman of the Antigua District, October 19, 1832.
To the Chairman of the Madras District, October 20, 1832.
To the Chairman of the Tamul District, October 23, 1832.
To the Chairman of the St. Vincents District, October or November, 1832.
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