

Virginia United Methodist *HERITAGE*
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of the United Methodist Church
Catherine D. Morgan, president

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Devereux Jarratt and the Beginnings of Methodism in Virginia

J. W. Smith

A paper originally published in the first — June 1901 — issue of The John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College, republished here by permission.

Revolutions, [in either] religious or political affairs — and the former is apt to precede the latter — come slowly and ordinarily "from below." This was as true of the momentous Virginia Revolution of 1776 as of that of France fourteen years later. And here in Virginia the process was the same — a constant pushing upward of those classes which Virginians called then and would call now "mean." Here in Virginia the upheaval began in the church. Fifty years before the Methodist Societies became the Methodist Church, the movement was well begun. It continued to increase in importance, gaining by the zeal of its leaders as well as by the reasonableness of its program, and the way was cleared for a new Virginia.

It is the purpose of this paper to trace briefly the life and influence of one of the silent, obscure workers of this Revolution; of a man whose name is seldom mentioned, yet one who deserves much from Virginians to-day — the Reverend Devereux Jarratt, of the parish of Bath, Dinwiddie county, Virginia.

Devereux Jarratt was born in New Kent county, Virginia, on January 6, 1732. Little is known concerning his parentage except what he himself tells us.¹ He was of English descent, his grandfather having been born in London, in Devereux county. His grandmother was a native of Ireland. Both of his grandparents on his father's side died before he was born. They were plain, poor people, "but industrious and rather rough in their manners." The father of Devereux, Robert Jarratt, was a simple, inoffensive man, and followed the trade of a carpenter. His mother "was the daughter of Joseph Bradley, of Charles City, a county bordering on New Kent."² None of his ancestors were wealthy or famous, but, as we might call them, people of moderate circumstances. A few lines from one of his letters shows well the circumstances in his home, and also the condition of the average "simple" folk of that day. "They always had plenty of plain food and raiment, wholesome and good, suitable to their humble station and the times in which they lived. Our food was altogether the produce of the farm, or plantation, except a little sugar, which was rarely used; and our raiment was altogether of my mother's manufacture, except our hats and shoes, the latter of which we never put on but in the winter season. We made no use of tea or coffee for breakfast, or at any other time; nor did I know a single family that made any use of them. Meat, bread and milk was the ordinary food of all my acquaintance. I suppose the richer sort might make use of those and other luxuries, but to such people

I had no access. We were accustomed to look upon what were called 'gentle folks' as beings of a superior order.³

No doubt part of Jarratt's earnestness and religious zeal of after years can be attributed to the simple teachings of his parents when he was very young. Like all *true* parents, they did not strive after honor and worldly fame for their children, but endeavored to instill the principles of honesty and virtue, that they might be a blessing to them and an honor to their country. Devereux's father died when he was six years old. At the age of eight years he was sent to an English school nearby. The course of study in those days was not so extensive as ours, and scarcely anything more was taught than "the three R's."⁴

In most parishes there were small schools, and "Beverly, who wrote in 1705, says that it was the habit of the people of Virginia to join together and form little schools for the education of the children."⁵ Private free schools were founded by individuals, and very often clever servants or young ministers were employed as tutors. Frequently advertisements like the following appear in the *Virginia Gazette*:

Middlesex, Oct. 26, 1769. "A single man that understands teaching Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, and comes well recommended, will meet with encouragement by applying to the subscriber."

We also find evidence that some effort was made to educate the colored [sic] children. There may be found in the vestry book of Petsworth Parish, in Gloucester county, a statement of October 30, 1716, wherein Ralph Bevis promises to "give George Petsworth, a molattoe boy of the age of 12 years, 3 years' schooling, and carefully to instruct him afterwards, that he may read well in any part of the Bible."⁶ So much for the educational advantages of that time.

Devereux's mother dying when he was about twelve, he was taken from school, and no more care was bestowed on his education. He now fell under the guardianship of his elder brother, but he was of such a lenient and kind disposition that young Jarratt was under no moral restraint whatever. He says: "I followed the way of my own heart, and walked in the sight of mine own eyes, not considering, as every one ought, *that for all these things God would bring Me into judgment.*"⁷ His time was now divided between working on a plantation and training race horses and gamecocks. At the age of seventeen he left his elder brother and became an apprentice at carpentering under his younger brother, Joseph.

He continued under the care of his brothers until he was about twenty, but during that time no thought was paid to religion. Cards, racing and dancing were the favorite pastimes of the ungodly, and even those who professed to be Christians were not entirely guiltless. Even the ministers gave themselves up to questionable sports, and were often found at the race course and the ball room. The duties of the Sabbath were performed in a regular, routine

manner, while on other days they pleased the body with worldly amusement. Mr. Blair, in a letter to the Bishop of London, dated Williamsburg, March 24, 1734, speaking concerning an anonymous letter, in which were objections urged against the present condition of the clergy, says, "and tho' there may be some truth in what he objects to the clergy in the point of drinking, it is neither so general nor to such a degree as he represents it."⁸ Indeed, we are told that they betted at cards, rattled dice, and even baptized children where the wine flowed freely, and the dance enabled them to display their clerical grace."⁹ So prevalent had been the wickedness that the General Assembly, at an early date, found it necessary to state that "ministers shall not give themselves to excess in drinking or riot, spending their time idly by day or night."¹⁰ Little progress had been made in morality in general even up to the time of the Revolution, for in the newspaper of the day we find this statement, "The heads of the church grow fat, where the poor curates wax lean. Some Bishops are termed men of pleasure, and their Ladies Women of Fashion. The superior clergy get rich, and their inferiors are Beggars. Cards, Fishing and drinking Punch engage too many of the Opulent, and sorrow and affliction the Distressed."¹¹

A quotation from Jarratt's letters will illustrate well the performances of the duties of the Sabbath by the clergy. "I know not that I ever heard any serious conversation respecting God and Christ, Heaven and Hell. There was a church in the parish, within three miles of me, and a great many people attended it every Sunday. But I went not once in a year. And if I had gone ever so often, I should not have been much the wiser, for the parish minister was but a poor preacher — very inapt to teach or even to gain the attention of an audience. Being very near-sighted, and preaching wholly by a written copy, he kept his eyes continually fixed on the paper, and so near that what he seemed rather address [sic] to the [pulpit] cushion than to the congregation. Except at a time when he might have a quarrel with anybody, then he would straighten up and speak lustily, that all might distinctly hear.

I remember to have heard he had once a quarrel with his clerk, and strove hard in vestry to turn the poor man out of his place, but failed in the attempt. The next Sunday he had prepared a scolding for him, and did vilify him stoutly, right over his head. The clerk sat it out to the last, and as soon as the angry sermon ended, he rose up, according to custom, to sing a Psalm. He wished to return the parson like for like, but was not allowed, there, to say anything but was contained within the lids of the Prayer-Book. However, to suit the discourse, and pay the minister in kind, he gave out the 2d Psalm, and with an audible voice read the first stanza thus —

With restless and ungovern'd rage,
Why do the heathen *storm*?
Why in such rash *attempts* engage,
As they can ne'er *perform*?¹²

Such, briefly, was the spiritual condition of the times, although we do not

mean to say that there were not a number of faithful ministers and hundreds of godly men and women.

While Devereux had been under the guardianship of his brothers, he had not entirely given up studying. Often, while the horse with which he plowed was grazing, many a telling moment was spent on arithmetic. He tells us that he was so well skilled in the Division of Crops, the Rule of Three and Practice, that his fame went abroad.¹³ A man named Jacob Moon, dwelling in Albemarle county, having heard concerning him, engaged his services as a schoolmaster. Packing up the little he possessed, and borrowing a horse from his brother, he set out for his new station.

The school fell below his expectations, so he remained here only one year. The following session he was fortunate enough to procure another school, but this was even worse than the first. Here he must board among those who employed him, proportioning his time as best he could. The first part of the term was spent with an ungodly family, given up to merriment and folly. Here Devereux wished to remain the whole year, but his time being up, he went to board with another family by the name of Cannon.

This household was entirely different from the late one. The lady of the house was a "new-light," and all levity and every form of ungodliness was banished from the home. Jarratt was now in somewhat of a dilemma. What must he do? Finally he decided to play the hypocrite. It seems that one of the customs of the lady was to read a sermon each night in Flavel, and naturally Jarratt was asked to join her. He accepted the invitation, thinking this would be one of the ways by which he could act his part. But just as the trickling stream, though slowly, but surely, wears away the stern rock, so these sermons came to have an effect upon his hardened heart. "But it pleased God, on a certain night, while she was reading, as usual, to draw out my attention, and fix it on the subject in a manner unknown to me before. The text of the sermon was, *Then opened he their understanding*. The subject was naturally as dark to me as any of the former, and yet I felt myself imprest with it, and saw my personal interest in the solemn truths — and truths I believe them to be."¹⁴

He now became conscious that he was a sinner, and this feeling followed him from morn till night. He now resolved, if possible, to save his soul from destruction, but the way was dark, and he tried to accomplish it by trusting in his own strength. His experience was one of continual warfare — "sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning." The next year he changed his abode and went back to Moon's. He still kept up his search after light, and did what he could to influence the family for good, but with little success.

One of his many embarrassments was the absence of books. He borrowed "Russell's Seven Sermons," and was fortunate in procuring the loan of Burkett's exposition on the New Testament. Sitting on the hearth, by the light of the blazing logs, he endeavored to know as much as his mind would allow concerning the great truths of Christianity. He became more intense

in his struggle, and gave up all questionable amusements. It was about this time that Devereux met with a severe defeat. He determined to pay a visit to his brothers, and renew the acquaintanceship of his friends. One night his brothers gathered a number of people for the purpose of dancing and drinking cider. Jarratt held aloof for some time, but at last the temptation was too strong, and he entered into all the gayeties [sic].¹⁵ His soul now met with a set-back, and for two or three months he tells us that he had little relish for anything of a religious nature.

The following year he went back to teach the son of Mr. Cannon. By the aid and example of Mrs. Cannon, he was brought back to his former resolves. He now became intimately acquainted with a Presbyterian minister, and had the help both of his sermons and his private conversation. It was about this time that he was truly converted, and we cannot pass without giving his account of it.

"While in this state of suspense, I was assaulted with very uncommon trials, and a perplexing thought followed me, that my case was singular, and that no man in the world had such trials, oppositions and enemies to contend with as I had. The Lord relieved me at last. I well remember the time and place, when and where I was sitting, with a good book in my hand. In this I read a great many discouraging cases, described by the author, with the promises adapted to such cases. I paid great attention to every case and promise — perhaps not without hope that God would be my friend. But not finding my case, I was still thinking it nameless, and altogether singular, and consequently there could be no promise in the Bible suitable to it. At last I cast my eye on Isaiah 62, 12 — *Thou shalt be called, sought out, a city not forsaken*. These words appeared very applicable to a *nameless* case, and I was enabled to apply them as such, to the great comfort of my soul. I saw, and believed, that though my case was *nameless*, and hid from all the men upon earth, yet God knew it, and would search me out for good, and not forsake me, or give me over into the hand of the enemy. I was blessed with faith to believe, not one promise only, but all the promises of the gospel, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I saw such a fullness in Christ, to save to the uttermost, that had I ten thousand souls as wretched and guilty as mine was, I could venture all His blood and righteousness without one doubt or fear. The comforts I then felt were beyond expression, and far superior to anything I had ever known before that memorable hour.

Eternal glories to the King,
Who brought me safely through;
My tongue shall never cease to sing,
And endless praise renew.

"Not that I suppose I never had true religion before this — I believe I had real religion, or I could not have gone through so many trials — but such a bright manifestation of the Redeemer's all-sufficiency and willingness to save, and such a divine confidence to rely on Him, I never had till that

moment. It was a little heaven upon earth — so sweet, so nourishing, so delightful. I uttered not a word, but silently rejoiced in God my Saviour."¹⁶

Before this, Devereux had to a small extent taken part in religious gatherings in the neighborhood. He had led in prayer, conducted the singing, and read several practical discourses to the people. He did not attempt to preach, but would interweave his thoughts into the sermons that he read, so that they would not appear different. His friends urged him to enter the ministry, but he paid little attention to the matter. He still continued to teach and study. Leaving Mr. Cannon's, he went into Cumberland and started a school at a Mr. Thomas Tabb's. Here he was fortunate enough in making the acquaintance of a young man by the name of Alexander Martin, and from him he took lessons in Latin and Greek.

In the spring of 1762, Jarratt stopped teaching, and began to prepare for admission to Holy Orders. At first he had decided to enter the Presbyterian ministry, but, later on, chiefly from a financial standpoint, he made up his mind to be an Episcopalian. In October of the same year, he left for England, to take the rites of ordination. At Christmas he was made deacon, and one week later priest. By the 10th of January, 1763, he was ready to return home, but on account of the condition of the weather, and sickness, he was delayed. He had the opportunity, while in the metropolis, to hear some of the greatest preachers of the day, and even to preach several times himself. He says that he preached so differently from the customary manner that he was suspected of being a Methodist, but that he did not know anything concerning their doctrines and principles. He heard Mr. Wesley and Mr. [Whitefield] both preach, but seems not have been so favorably impressed. On the first Sunday in July, 1763, he reached Virginia, after being away for nine months.¹⁷

His first work now was to find a vacant parish. He knew of only one, but this was not suitable to his taste. He went to Cumberland and remained there for a few weeks, preaching in the parish of one of his old friends. In August, hearing that the parish of Bath was unoccupied, he went to enquire about it. The vestry met and unanimously agreed to retain him. Devereux was now thirty-one years of age, and he remained here, serving the people, until his death. Several ministers had preceded him, but, from his own account, the religious condition of the people was sadly lacking. They seemed to know scarcely anything concerning the essential truths of the gospel. They had been accustomed to hear well-sounding discourses concerning morality, but the real, vital matters were left untouched.

Jarratt's preaching was entirely different, and more like the Methodists than the clergy of the Established Church. His subjects were conversion, the new birth, and the inefficiency of good works. The questionable sports and amusements of the day were cried out against, and he strove to show that the gospel extended to the minutest detail. In a word, he revolutionized the whole scope of preaching in his section. Indeed, not alone did the communicants behold him with amazement, but the clergy viewed him with

suspicion — "Yea, I was opposed and reproached by the clergy, called an enthusiast, fanatic, visionary, dissenter, Presbyterian, madman, and what not."¹⁸ Yet, like the apostle, none of these things moved him. He lived to carry out his well-grounded and established convictions. It was woe to him if he did not preach the gospel. He had passed through many a struggle, his soul had yearned for light, and since he had found it he could not help but publish it abroad and thereby deliver his own soul.

"Instead of moral harangues, and advising my hearers in a cool dispassionate manner, to walk in the *primrose paths of a decided, sublime and elevated virtue*, and not to tread in the foul tracks of *disgraceful vice*, I endeavored to expose, in the most alarming colors, the guilt of sin, the entire depravity of human nature, — the awful danger mankind are in, by nature and practice — the tremendous curse to which they are obnoxious, and their utter inability to evade the sentence of the law and the strokes of divine justice, by their own power, merit, or good works."¹⁹

Can we not see in this manner of preaching a preparation for the advent of Methodism? His method was very similar to theirs and the great doctrines which they strove to revise were the same. He even went so far as to preach in private houses, and hold meetings at different homes in the evenings. The clergy wrote him threatening letters, and one of them in particular, because he preached in private houses, but Jarratt silenced him by replying that he did not know of any minister that failed to enter a private house and preach a funeral sermon for the sake of forty shillings.

Previous to speaking concerning the introduction of Methodism, let us take a somewhat hurried glance at the stronghold which the Episcopal church had, together with the appearance of other denominations among them. Up to about the year 1740, the Established Church held sway. Here and there might have been found a few dissenters, but in the main the Church of England predominated.... Men were compelled by law to attend on the ceremonies of one sect, and those who dissented were denied the privilege of citizenship. Again, every one was required to contribute to the support of the clergy, whether he was of that belief or not. Finally a great number of ministers had risen up, who were careless and slack about their duties, giving themselves up to pleasure.²⁰ Can we wonder that there began to be a reaction; that different sects should arise, promulgating doctrines at variance with the Church establishment? The two denominations that appeared in Virginia, previous to the year 1772, to help undermine the strength of the Church, were the Baptists and the Presbyterians.

As early as the year 1714, a small party of Baptists from the mother country had settled in the southeastern part of the colony. These were termed *regular* Baptists. In 1739, George [Whitefield] appeared in America, that great "prodigy of religious energy and eloquence." A large number of Baptists in the north, influenced by his preaching, left their party, and were known as *Separates* [sic]. A number of them, between 1744 and 1755,

traveled south to the borders of North Carolina. Shortly after this they extended their labors into Virginia, and "in August, 1760, the first Baptist church of this order was planted on the soil of the Old Dominion." Under the united efforts of such men as Samuel Harriss and James Read, the number of followers greatly increased, and it was evident that they were soon to be an important factor in the history of the Established Church.²¹

The first Presbyterian congregation of which we know was gathered near what is now the present site of Martinsburg, in 1719. A preacher was sent to them from the Synod of Philadelphia. Soon other churches were established, and Presbyterianism began to take root in the Valley. Between 1740 and 1743, Samuel Morris, of Hanover, gathered a few families together, and read to them from religious works. This was the beginning of the Presbyterian church in lower Virginia. Their first minister was William Robinson, who, suffering from embarrassments in the mother country, came to America. Under his ministry the church grew, and several congregations were formed.

Probably the one who did more to establish this denomination in Virginia than any other man was Samuel Davies. Born in Newcastle, Delaware, Nov. 3, 1724, he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of the same place in 1745. Two years later he came to Virginia, complied with the Toleration Act and subscribed to the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, with a few exceptions. In 1748, licenses were obtained for three churches in Hanover and one in Henrico. Davies now threw himself whole-soul into the work. His preaching is described as being with unusual power. One writer speaks as follows, "the objects of faith drew near to the listener, heaven opened, and celestial melody was wafted from its portals; the world of despair was unlocked and shown to the impenitent."²² It is said that Patrick Henry stated that he learned from him what an orator should be. Progress continued, and in 1755 the Hanover Presbytery was formed, which comprised the churches of Virginia and some in North Carolina. Under its auspices two schools were established, where the youth might be instructed in religion as well as in science.²³

With the increase of each denomination persecution began. Ministers were carried before magistrates and commanded not to preach. Some were cast into prison as though they were criminals, and others were insulted while performing the duties of the church; even attempts were being made to turn their ceremonies into a farce. We cannot fail to mention that old and familiar household story about Patrick Henry and his connection with one of the persecutions. Three Baptists were brought to Fredericksburg to answer to the charge of "preaching the gospel contrary to law." Patrick Henry, having heard some little concerning the arrest, came to hear more. He remained quiet while the indictment was being read, and until the prosecutor had opened the case, then with all solemnity due the occasion, he said to the court, "May it please your worships, what did I hear read? Did I hear it distinctly,

or was it a mistake of my own? Did I hear an expression that these men, whom your worships are about to try for misdemeanor, are charged with *preaching the gospel of the Son of God*?" The orator continued his appeal, and we are told that the court was near the point of bidding the sheriff dismiss the prisoner.

Madison, in a letter to Mr. William Bradford, Jr., dated Jan. 24, 1774, writes, "That diabolical, hell-conceived principle of persecution rages among some; and to their eternal infamy, the clergy can furnish their quota of imps for such business. This vexes for the worse [sic] of anything whatever. There are at this time, in the adjacent county not less than five or six well-meaning men in close jail for publishing their religious sentiments, which in the main are very orthodox. I have neither patience to hear, talk or think of anything relating to this matter, for I have squabbled and scolded, abused and ridiculed so long about it, to little purpose, that I am without common patience. So I must beg you to pity me, and pray for liberty of conscience to all."²⁴

But these things did not hinder their growth or development. It seems that the human race has been a long time learning that one of the best ways to cause a religious sect to grow is by persecution. Thus, in a few words, were the religious forces in Virginia arrayed when Methodism made its appearance. The Established Church on one side, contending for strict conformity, the Baptists and Presbyterians on the other, striving for religious freedom and a right to worship as they chose.²⁵

In our consideration of the advent of Methodism, we must remember that she entered as a part of the church establishment and not as a dissenting branch.

Methodism owes its introduction in Virginia to Robert Williams, her pioneer in the old colony. He was born in England, but crossed over into Ireland, where he labored as a local preacher under the direction of the Methodist Societies. Some time later, Mr. Wesley gave him permission to preach in America, under the guidance of his missionaries. He was in extremely poor circumstances, and his passage was paid for by some of his friends. He arrived in America in 1769, and was stationed for some time in New York. In the year 1772 he made his first visit to Virginia, stopping in Norfolk. Taking his stand on the steps of the courthouse, he began to sing, and continued until a number of people gathered around him. Then, after prayer, he selected his text, and addressed the hearers. He preached in a manner so strange to what the people had been accustomed to hear, that some of them thought he was really swearing and profaning the name of God. Jarratt met him the next year, and received him into his home. Here he remained for about a week, preaching several sermons in the parish. Devereux was favorably impressed with his discourses and liked his animated manner. He mentions him as a "plain, artless, indefatigable preacher of the gospel," being "greatly blessed in detecting the hypocrites,

razing false foundations, and stirring believers up to press after a present salvation from the remains of sin."²⁶

Possessing somewhat the same earnestness, Devereux entered heartily into the work, but at the same time believing that the Methodists did not intend to leave the church. Williams informed him that they were true and sincere members of the Church of England, and their object was to build her up and reform the existing evils of the times. Books were loaned him, and by means of these he came to know their general plan, and that "He that left the church, left the Methodists." Devereux's home now became a stopping place for the ministers, and in *Asbury's Journal* we find this statement, "Held quarterly meeting at Boisseau's Chapel. From thence I hastened to Mr. Jarratt's barn, where the people were waiting."²⁷

Previous to Williams' entrance into Virginia, a wonderful revival had broken forth under the strong and powerful preaching of Jarratt. People gathered in private houses evening after evening, where instruction in divine things was given. In the year 1770 and 1771, the outpouring of the Spirit was considerable at a place called White Oak. Here Devereux formed the people in a society for mutual advantage. The revival increased during the year 1772, and after this the Methodists were present to help.... When the Methodists came, they entered fully into the work, and the revival greatly increased.

Jarratt worked in perfect harmony with them. Everything possible was done to upbuild the church of Christ. Many hardened hearts were softened and made new. Old grey-haired men were made to cry out for mercy, under the wonderful power of the Spirit. Love feasts were held, in which many, who had once been under the power of sin, could not tell of their wonderful deliverance. The fetters of sin had been broken, the chains of bondage had been loosed, and the free sunshine of God's love filled their hearts. Jarratt gives us a description of one of these gatherings. "As soon as it began, the power of the Lord came down on the assembly like a rushing mighty wind, and it seemed as if the whole house was filled with the presence of God. A flame kindled and ran from heart to heart. Many were deeply convinced of sin; many mourners were filled with consolation; and many believers were so overwhelmed with love that they could not doubt but God had enabled them to love Him with all their heart."

Jarratt was viewed with suspicion by his brother clergy, and to such an extent that, in one of their conventions held in the year 1774, at Williamsburg, he was insulted.²⁸

During this year the first regular circuit was formed. Societies were organized in Jarratt's parish "and in other places, as far as North Carolina." "They began to ride their circuit and to take care of deepening and spreading the work of God."²⁹

It was during this wonderful revival that Mr. Asbury became associated with Mr. Jarratt. Mr. and Mrs. Jarratt received him with outstretched hands,

and he often made their home his stopping place. In his journal of Feb. 12, 1776, Mr. Asbury says concerning him, "I find him a man of agreeable spirit, and had some satisfaction in conversing with him. He has agreed, if convenient, to attend our next Conference."

In October of the same year, the church establishment received a fatal blow. In the Legislature, holding its session at Williamsburg, petitions were sent in, urging action on the laws affecting conscience, and for a repeal of the oppressive laws of the church. There was a desperate struggle, but the advocates of freedom were victorious, and there was a further separation of Church and State. In all this contest the Methodists were true to the Church of England, and did what they could to help maintain the present existing condition. Mr. Jarratt continued to use all his forces with the new part of the church. He believed they would always be true, and naturally so, because did not even the leaders think the same? But, little by little, the timbers were being pulled apart, until finally the crash must come.

In some respects Devereux belonged strictly to no denomination. He was at variance with his own church in some degree at least, and the new sect, still professing to be a part of the regular church had not organized themselves into a separate body. Societies were constantly being formed, in which the doctrines peculiar to Methodism were being taught, and Jarratt, by his help, was unconsciously working against the church to which he belonged formerly.

At the Conference, in 1782, Mr. Jarratt was present and preached the opening sermon. At noon the next day, he spoke on the "Union of the Attributes."³⁰ It was at this session of Conference that the following resolution was passed, that, "The Conference acknowledge their obligations to the Rev. Mr. Jarratt for his kind and friendly services to the preachers and people, from their first entrance into Virginia; and more particularly for attending our Conference in Sussex, both in public and private; and we advise the preachers in the south to consult him, and to take his advice in the absence of Brother Asbury."³¹

Jarratt continued faithful to them until the very time of their separation, because he was present at their Conference in 1784, and says that "Mr. Asbury was still striving to render an attachment to the church yet more firm and permanent," and also that he (Mr. Asbury) had brought with him Mr. Wesley's twelve reasons against a separation from the church.³²

In the latter part of the same year, the crash came, the branch was separated from the vine. It seems strange that Mr. Jarratt could not see that it was almost an impossibility for them to remain joined. For some reason or other, as soon as they did separate, Jarratt hurled invectives against them. In a letter to a friend, he wrote, "And who would suppose that before the close of this same year" (1784) "he" (referring to Mr. Asbury) "and the whole *body of Methodists* broke off from the church at a single stroke! What mighty magic was able to effect so great a change in one day! It was certainly the greatest

change (apparently at least) that ever was known to take place, in so short a time, since the foundation of the Christian church was laid. They embraced a new faith, and it showed itself by their works, for from that memorable period old *things were done away* — their *old mother*, to whom they had avowed so much duty and fidelity, was discarded and violently opposed."³³

During the remainder of his life he would constantly utter invectives in his letters against the Methodists. On one occasion he complains that they had maltreated him, and in another he says they are falling to pieces, and he predicts their entire destruction. Why Jarratt seemed so bitter against them we are not able to see, yet, near the close of his life, he seems to have mollified a little, for, in a letter of 1795, six years before his death, he says, "How to reconcile such palpable insincerity to Christianity I know not, nor shall I attempt it; and yet I cannot but hope that a number of them are good men, notwithstanding Mr. McRobert, perhaps, very justly attributed their professed adherence to the church to nothing but policy and I suppose, when that policy failed, they fell upon another, which they liked better; *but if this policy was intended for the good of souls and the promotion of religion principally, might not some allowances be made* for it, tho' candor seemed to be lacking? . . . And, therefore, notwithstanding the Methodists have given great cause to suspect the sincerity of their professions on more occasions than one, *I feel myself disposed to put the most favorable construction on all their movements*, which the nature of things will bear."³⁴

After his withdrawal from the Methodists, his own clergymen seemed to have been more friendly disposed towards him. He was present at their convention in 1790, and he says some notice was taken of him, and that he was invited to lead prayers one of the mornings while there. He was also present at the convention the following year, and was appointed to preach at the convention of '92.

The old servant of God continued his labors until his death. His body was under many trials and afflictions, but he worked every moment he could. In 1795, he says, "I have now lived in the world just sixty-two years... old and afflicted as I am, I travelled more than one hundred miles last week, was at three funerals, and married two couples." Part of his time was spent in writing and revising sermons for the press. Like the prophet of old, he labored until God took him. On the 29th of January, 1801, his soul passed from earth to his God. Bishop Asbury was requested to preach his funeral sermon. He did so from the words, "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." In his journal of the same date, Mr. Asbury says of his ministry, "I have already observed that the ministry of Mr. Jarratt was successful. I verily believe that hundreds were awakened by his labors."

Concerning his character, we think it can be plainly read from his works. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Loving, cheerful, always striving for

the good of others. To him does Methodism owe a living tribute of praise and glory. He it was who helped them to gain a foothold, and become what they are to-day. He it was who, when oppressed by his own sect, nevertheless went about doing good and striving to fulfil [sic] his mission.

Would it be saying too much that we see in his life an expression of the spirit of the Master whom he followed, and some of that noble, sacrificing spirit which caused Him to give His life for many? He has passed away to the city beyond, but the world to-day, we of Virginia, are reaping the harvest from the seed which he sowed, and his great works will never be known until the day when all secrets shall be revealed.

1. Life of Jarratt, page 12. When we refer the reader to the Life of Jarratt, we mean the one written by himself, in a series of letters addressed to the Rev. John Coleman, of Maryland. Baltimore, 1806.
2. Life of Jarratt, page 13.
3. Life of Jarratt, page 13.
4. See Fiske, *Old Virginia and Her Neighbors*, Vol. II, page 242.
5. *William and Mary College Quarterly*, VI, 1.
6. *William and Mary College Quarterly*, V, 219.
7. Life of Jarratt, page 20.
8. Church in Virginia 1650-1676, page 357.
9. See Howison's History of Virginia, Vol. 2, Chap. III.
10. Henning in Baird, page 98.
11. *Virginia Gazette*, March 3, 1774.
12. Life of Jarratt, page 21.
13. Life of Jarratt, page 25.
14. Life of Jarratt, page 34.
15. Life of Jarratt, page 43.
16. Life of Jarratt, page 47.
17. See his Life, pages 55-78.
18. Life of Jarratt, page 86.
19. Life of Jarratt, page 89.
20. See Howison's History of Virginia, Vol. 2, 155.
21. See Semple's History of the Baptists in Virginia, Chap. I; Howison's History of Virginia, Vol. 2, Chap. III.
22. Howison's History of Virginia, Vol. 2, page 180.
23. See Howison's History of Virginia, Vol. 2, Chap. III; Campbell's History of Virginia, Chap. XXIX.
24. Madison's Works, Vol. 1, page 12.
25. See Semple, Chap. III.
26. *Asbury's Journal*, page 159.
27. *Asbury's Journal*, page 345.
28. Life of Jarratt, page 131.
29. Methodism in Virginia, Bennett, page 65.
30. *Asbury's Journal*, Vol. I, page 344.
31. History of the Methodists, page 81.
32. Life of Jarratt, page 114.
33. Life of Jarratt, page 119.
34. Life of Jarratt, page 158.

This year, 2001, marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Virginia Conference Historical Society, elected in 1931 as the Conference Historical Committee. It seems only fitting, then, that this year the Historical Society should host historians from throughout the Southeastern Jurisdiction for a four-day conference around the theme, "**Virginia and the Beginnings of American Methodism.**" Dates are mid-day Tuesday, July 10, through mid-day Friday, July 13, 2001; location is Randolph-Macon College, Ashland, and Duncan Memorial Church on the campus. *HERITAGE* readers and *all* United Methodist laity and clergy — in fact, all who are intrigued by the subject of the conference — are welcome to attend all or part of the program.

And what a program it promises to be. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Roger H. Martin, president of Randolph-Macon College, on *Wesley's Transatlantic Contribution to Higher Education in America, with Special Reference to Virginia*. Dr. Robert S. Alley, professor *emeritus* of humanities at the University of Richmond, will address the subject, *Take Alarm: The Fading Legacy of Madison on Church and State?* The rich story of Methodism's very first American property, in Leesburg, Virginia, will be told through a 20-minute video documentary. Bishop H. Hasbrouck Hughes, Jr., will discuss *The Rev. William Watters (1751-1827) and the Drama of Early American Methodism*. Bishop Hughes will also be the celebrant and preacher at the Eucharist, which will employ *John Wesley's Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*.

David L. Holmes, professor of religion at the College of William and Mary, will tell of *Devereux Jarratt, Evangelical Anglican Circuit Rider*. On Thursday, July 12, Dr. Russell E. Richey, dean of Candler School of Theology, Emory University, and a renowned Methodist historian, will present a study of *Francis Asbury, James O'Kelly, and Methodism's Growing Pains*. The final scholarly paper will be from Dr. Kirk Mariner, pastor of Williamsburg Church and a scholar of his Eastern Shore homeland, on: *East of the Chesapeake: Methodism's Forgotten "Garden."*

Music will fill the air each of the three evenings of the conference. Dr. Odell Hobbs, retired music professor and choir director at Virginia Union University, Richmond, will present his specialty, *Yet Another Lesson in the Art of the "Sperchuls," Commonly Called "Spirituals."* Patricia Jo Kinman Avery, a doctoral candidate at Shenandoah University, will hold "singing school" as she tells of *The Contributions of William R. Rhinehardt to a Shape Note Tradition in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ*. And finally, Kirk Mariner will entertain with his collection of original songs about church life, *No Bazaars When Jesus Comes*.