WILLIAM HAMMETT

Missionary and Founder of the Primitive Methodist Connection

by D. A. Reily

William Hammett, Irish Methodist preacher, was ordained by John Wesley, along with Joshua Keighley and William Warrener, for work in the New World, at the dawn of July 28, 1786.¹ The British Conference Minutes for 1786 indicate that he was destined for Newfoundland.² Blown far off course in a violent storm, in which he demonstrated considerable courage, Hammett was taken instead to St. Christopher on St. Kitts in the West Indies, arriving there January 18, 1787. News of their coming had preceded them, and a place for them to lodge and to preach had already been provided.³

Hammett’s journal gives day-to-day knowledge of his ecclesiastical labors, the texts he preached, and the classes, societies, and bands he met. At the same time, each entry is so brief as to exclude anything more personal than the state of his bodily or spiritual health. Specifically, his method was to devote a page of his journal to each month—the month (plus the year each January) in very bold letters, and numbering down the page the days of the month. He then entered to the left of the numbers the day of the week, abbreviated. To the right he entered the activity of the day, including places preached, texts, often some remark as to results. From time to time there are remarks like “indisposed” or “fever,” on the days he was unable to carry out his usual duties. However, out of this laconic account we are able to follow Hammett as he proclaims God’s good news, as his chapels take shape, and as his circuit expands. We do not, however, get a complete picture of the man himself, for he seldom reveals his own thoughts or feelings, or even how he develops his texts. But the intensity of his activity, the constant expansion of his circuits, the workers who are raised up to cooperate in the work, his perseverance—all this shines through quite plainly.

The St. Kitts ministry occupies from April 1, 1787 to January 1789 in Hammett’s journal. His preaching schedule was as follows in April 1787. Sunday: morning and evening at Basseterre; Monday evening: preaching at Basseterre; Tuesday: “Old Road”; Wednesday: “Sandy Point”; Thursday: Basseterre; Friday and Saturday, Class meetings. The frequent use of “Do.” (ditto) indicates the fact that Hammett had no hesitation. On the 18th of the month,

he organized a society of nine members at Old Road. From the 23rd to the 28th, he visited St. Eustatius, where he added twenty members to the society there, bringing the total to ninety.

Frequently he notes places visited for the "first time." By November, he had added regular weekly appointments to his circuit, including Cayon's and Deepbay, as well as occasional visits to Mourns. Saturday morning found him meeting a "catechumen's class." April, 1788, is worth transcribing, to show the expansion of the work in a little over a year. (As nearly as possible, I follow Hammett's exact form, including abbreviations and punctuation.)


Brazier, one of a goodly number of helpers which Hammett raised up, became a most valuable preacher in the West Indies, and, later on, in the United States. During the following months Hammett's journal reveals the names of a number of other helpers. For instance, on May 13, 1788, "Bro. Meredith" exhortcd at the "Allowces," and his name appears frequently thereafter, either exhorting or preaching. On June 18 and 20, respectively, Brothers Lynn and Percival exhort. With these lay helpers, Hammett was able to add new preaching places regularly. We find regular mention of work at the Pond Estate, Sir Patrick Blake's, Sir Ralph Payne's, Mr. Brown's, Coleman's, French Ground, Duglasses, Rumney's Seat. Parallel to this geographical expansion, the work prospercd at Basseterre, where Hammett was busy during December 1788, enlarging the meeting house and adding ten pews.5

When Thomas Coke visited the missions in January 1789, Hammett accompanied him around the island of St. Kitts. Coke transferred him to the island of Tortola. He preached his first sermon there on January 25.6 To facilitate his work, he took license as a dissenting minister, June 16, 1789.7 Meanwhile, Hammett began his work with vigor, though the society on Tortola was much smaller than the work on St. Kitts. He preached at every opportunity, met classes (for men and women separately), and organized "catechumen's class." Hammett apparently worked alone during the last part of January and February, when he was joined by Brazier, who immediately took a part of the preaching load. This freed Hammett

4 William Hammett Journal. South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
Original document in Duke University Library, Hammett Papers.
to concentrate upon an adequate meeting house. March 22, 1789, found him “much hurried, setting the carpenters to work at our chapel,” while Brazier preached and exhorted. In April Hammett, while engaged with the class on Sundays, could dedicate most of his time “to break ground in the country.” Crookshank says that Hammett “was appointed to divide his labors between Tortola and Santa Cruz.” In May he visited “St. Croix” for two weeks, pre-aching a number of times at “Mrs. Lillie’s” and elsewhere. There seems to have been some work already there, but Hammett does not indicate clearly if this was the case or not.

Upon his return to Tortola, Hammett formally opened the chapel on Sunday, June 14, 1789, preaching from I Kings 8:27-30 in the morning, and from Heb. 4:12 in the evening. The work in Tortola, as was to be the case elsewhere, was financed, at least in part, by pew rent. Though McVean arrived on July 13, evidently to relieve Hammett, July was a month of remarkable expansion of the work. Fat-Hog Bay, Costten Bay, Mr. Tomison’s, and Purcell’s jute-estate were all visited for the first time, either the end of June or during July.

The four-day voyage from Tortola to Jamaica, during which he experienced “great danger,” left him still unfit to preach on August 6, 1789, the day after his arrival. Friday and Sunday he preached, the text for Friday being a sort of declaration of intention: “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (I Cor. 2:2). Though William Hammett was the first Wesleyan missionary regularly appointed to Jamaica, there was already work there, as the first time he met the class on Wednesday, August 19, there were twenty-five members. It seems that the first class which he himself organized on Jamaica consisted “of eight persons, three of whom were whites, and the others free blacks.” He purchased a house and fitted it out as a chapel, which was inaugurated October 11, 1789. Then on March 6 of the following year, he was “busy about the galleries” to accommodate the crowds.

By January of 1790, a number of outstations were regularly attended, such as Hope Estate, East-End, and Coe’s. Lindsay exhorted regularly on Saturday nights at East-End. However, on Saturday, February 13, he made an attempt at “preaching.”

8 Journal, April 13, 1789.
10 Journal, May 1789, passim.
11 Ibid., July 1, 1789.
12 Ibid.
13 Crookshank, op. cit., 76.
14 Journal, loc. cit.
15 Coe, a “honest puritan,” seems to have been one of the first to open his home to the Methodists. See Journal, August 8, 1789.
heard Mr. Lindsay attempt to preach from a text," writes Hammett. One judges from the comment, and from the fact that his name is absent for a month, when he exorted at Coe's, that the result was dismal. After July, the diary becomes even more laconic, but we find Mt. Faraway mentioned several times, and Port Royal became a prominent place in the Jamaica work. The name "Twifoot" suggests another worker, but may be a home where preaching was regularly held. Hammett seldom mentions numbers, but Crookshank tells us that about 100 were in society after the first year, and that the chapel he fitted out was large enough to accommodate 1,400 people. Crookshank also tells us that there was considerable persecution, but Hammett does not mention this in his journal.

Hammett tells us in the American portion of his journal that he was caught in a violent rain-storm while going up into the mountains of Jamaica, and came down with a fever. It was in this state that Coke found him when he visited Kingston, Jamaica, early in January of 1791, and he took Hammett to America to recuperate. Coke considered him one of his outstanding missionaries in the Indies. He wrote: "The two most flourishing societies in the West Indies, Antigua excepted, were raised by his [Hammett's] indefatigable labours; and there are few in the world with whom I have been acquainted that possess the proper apostolic spirit in equal degree with him." Coke considered him one of his outstanding missionaries in the Indies. 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Enroute to Charleston, Coke and Hammett were shipwrecked off Edisto Island, near Charleston, arriving there February 23, 1791. Asbury had been expecting Coke for the South Carolina Conference, which evidently had ended the day before, and the appointments were made when Coke and Hammett arrived. Considerably recuperated, despite the ship-wreck, and considered a near-martyr to the Jamaica mob, Hammett was asked to preach. The stage was set for the impression his eloquence was to make upon the Charleston Methodists, who decided he was the only man for their pulpit. Asbury confided his uneasiness to his Journal: "I am somewhat distressed at the uneasiness of the people, who claim the right to choose their own preachers—a thing quite new among the Methodists. None but Mr. Hammett will do them. We shall see how it will end." Hammett followed Asbury as far as Philadelphia, bearing a long list of names petitioning his appointment to Charleston. "To this, as far as I had to say, I submitted," wrote Asbury somewhat cryptically,
but evidently making Hammett a third minister in Charleston. Hammett evidently considered himself appointed as preacher in charge. But, somewhat inexplicably, he continued to New York where he preached at the Conference, and then in the “new Church”. Asbury, not an impartial judge, states that his first sermon was “not well received,” and the second more “exceptionable” still. Though considering himself appointed to Charleston, Hammett still tarried, even filling the pulpit in Baltimore for six weeks; his explication is that he could not get a ship sooner. When he finally arrived in Charleston, he found that Reuben Ellis, Elder, and James Parks, minister, did not in any wise consider him the chief minister, and that Ellis merely appointed him “by courtesy,” whereby Hammett believed Bishop Asbury guilty of duplicity.

Hammett must have arrived in Charleston toward the end of July. Unfortunately, we do not know what intervened between then and December. But, feeling himself unjustly treated by Asbury and, perhaps, by the Charleston preachers, he separated from the American Methodists and began preaching in the market in Charleston on Christmas, 1791. When Asbury returned to South Carolina on his annual tour, he heard news of the schism, and upon arrival received a “full report” from Parks and Ellis, discovering that Hammett had taken some twenty members (“some wheat and some chaff”). In the conference that followed, they were unusually careful in examining the “characters, doctrines, and experience” of the preachers. They accepted the resignation of one “Mr. Matthews,” though Asbury later felt they should have expelled him. (Matthews later joined with Hammett.) Asbury was concerned enough to urge Ezekiel Cooper to come south immediately to help “stem the tide.” Though Hammett’s Journal is blank for this period, at least something can be gathered by the pamphlet warfare which ensued, beginning with Hammett’s An Appeal to Truth and Circumstances, promptly answered by Thomas Morrell in Truth Discovered, etc. Hammett then issued his Rejoinder.

John Dickins entered the lists with his Friendly Remarks. Hammett also severely criticized Thomas Coke for slave-

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21 Ibid., May 17, 1791.
22 Ibid., May 30, 1791.
23 William Hammett, A Rejoinder, etc. Charleston: I. Silliman, 1792, p. 27. It should be noted, however, that on his own admission Hammett had come to the United States to recover his health, not intending to stay more than two months, which would hardly allow of a regular appointment. Journal, February 24, 1793.
25 Asbury, op. cit., February 7, 11, 1792.
26 Ibid., February 14, 1792.
holding and other abuses in his *Impartial Statement* addressed to the Wesleyan Methodist preachers (October 24, 1792), and replied to by Coke in his *Address to the Preachers* early in 1793.

What were Hammett's grievances? Asbury lists them as three, but the list is hardly adequate. "1. The American preachers and people insulted him. 2. His name was not printed in our *Minutes.* 3. The *Nota bene* cautioning minute was directed against him." However, he goes on to state: "We are considered by him as seceders from Methodism!—because we do not wear gowns and powder; and because we did not pay sufficient respect to Mr. Wesley." Had the three grievances listed by Asbury been the real ones, they could easily have been explained or rectified. As we saw above, it would hardly have been expected to enter Hammett's name to the *Minutes*, if he planned to stay only two months, or even six months. Even if he felt himself "insulted," apologies might have been made. As for the cautioning minute, found on page 132 of the *Minutes* for 1793 (approved by the conferences in 1792), it was obviously placed there as a caution against false Methodist preachers. If they claimed to be "traveling preachers," they would have been sent out by an annual conference; if "local," approved by the "quarterly conference". The note was to avoid the repetition of the case of the man who had recently passed through the Carolinas calling himself a Methodist preacher, and hoodwinking the Methodists into contributing sufficient money to buy himself a horse. No, the real objection was that Hammett really did believe that Asbury had pushed Wesley aside, and that American Methodists really had separated from the Wesleyan trunk. Though there is no doubt that Hammett was offended by what he considered Asbury's duplicity, as the following brief excerpts from his *Rejoindre* and his *Journal* clearly show, his objections went much deeper:

This act of your conference [namely striking Wesley's name from the *Minutes*] in 1787, is my proof . . . that you *seceded* from Mr. Wesley, and *that* without the consent of a general conference or the will of the people. But it was done by a kind of aristocratic body, the mere creatures of a party, who made a rent in the body of Methodists, which is not likely to be repaired till those men who caused it are cut off at least from their despotism, and the eyes of others are opened to see their folly.

In his private *Journal*, Hammett professes amazement that the American Methodists have allowed "themselves to be trammell'd with the most rigid Episcopacy in the world except that of the

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29 Asbury, op. cit., February 11, 1792.
30 *Minutes*, op. cit.
31 *Rejoindre*, p. 20.
Church of Rome.” He declares soon afterwards, “Mr. Asbury deter‐
minded to raise himself to the station of an Arch Bishop (tho’ not
bearing the name).”  

The American Methodists were frequently referred to as “Mr. Asbury’s connection” as over against the true or “Mr. Wesley’s connection”. The name which Hammett gave to the “connection” he formed also bears out the theory that he understood that he was loyal to Methodism in its original form; his was the Primitive Methodist Church. However, though Hammett considered himself a true Wesleyan, the British Methodist Conference did not so consider him. In a letter from the British Conference to Asbury and the American Methodist preachers, it was stated: “The English Conference . . . do most deeply disapprove of the schism which William Hammet has made in the city of Charleston, and we acknowledge no further connection with him. . . .”  

Though silent for 1792, Hammett’s Journal is quite detailed for 1793, has sparse information for 1794 (only five pages), and is considerably fuller for 1795. It contains information for January of 1796, and is silent until March 14, 1803, when a sort of “last will and testament” is transcribed.  

Sunday was the “big” day at Hammett’s Trinity Primitive Methodist Church in Charleston, described as a “fine, commodious church at the corner of Hazel Street and Maiden Lane.”  

The following Journal entries for typical Sundays in 1793 show Hammett at work:  

I met the Band Society at half-past five, and found a refreshing season. At the usual time read the morning and communion service, preached from Philipians (sic) 1.11, Being filled with the fruits, &c. Second from John 11.35, Jesus wept, & third from John 9.27 Will ye also be his disciple (sic). After the forenoon sermon I administered the holy Sacrament & found a good deal of freedom in preaching in the afternoon and evening.

This morning I had a love feast with my brethren in the Band: preached thrice, & read prayers, but did not meet society, on account of the evening being thundering and weat (sic).

I rose in due time to meet the band society at half after five, and have preached in the forenoon from Mat. 19.29th . . . Tho’ it was a rainy morning, I had about 300 hearers. In the afternoon I preached from 2 Chron. 15.4 . . . and in the evening from I Cor. 1.28,29—After

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32 Journal, February 24, 1793.
33 Letter of August 15, 1792, quoted in Crookshank, op. cit., p. 76.
which I met the society, and exhorted them against evil speaking and bickerings.\textsuperscript{36}

In addition to his regular activities as revealed above, there are frequent references to baptisms and weddings. “In the forenoon, after service, I baptized upwards of a dozen of our black society, who conducted themselves with great propriety.”\textsuperscript{36} On June 9, 1793, John Honours and thirteen colored people were baptized. Something of a record was established on August 1, 1793 when “about 25 people, young and old” were baptized at one service. One is inclined to agree with Hammett that this continued growth, and the consistently large and attentive congregations which worshipped at Trinity each Sunday was not due merely to the novelty of it!\textsuperscript{37}

A station, Hammett’s Charleston ministry was quite different from his work in the West Indies. One of the few efforts to extend the bounds of the work was a disappointment. Only fifteen attended his preaching on May 23, 1793, at Goose Creek, an area where many rich planters made their homes. Sister W., a Methodist, took the preacher through the rain to her son’s home. Already angry with Hammett for making a Methodist of his mother and convincing his daughter not to attend dancing school, the young planter preferred to ride off to a relative’s house, rather than greet the preacher!

Hammett’s Journal lets us see behind the scenes as he builds and improves his chapels and parsonage. He took special pains with the handsome brass chandeliers which were purchased and installed at a cost of over forty-four pounds sterling. Hardly had they been installed when, upon entering the Church on Sunday morning, some of the arms were seen to be missing. It was discovered soon thereafter that a young man named Bird had broken off the arms to sell the brass at four pence per pound weight.\textsuperscript{38} We find him enlarging the galleries, adding pews, not without much difficulty with his master-worker, who, though a Methodist, left the job unfinished and when admonished by the pastor, “got into a rage, and said many things unworthy of a Christian.”\textsuperscript{39} Hammett also built a parsonage, probably in anticipation of marriage, although his Journal gives us no hint of a courtship, unless the fairly frequent visits to “friends” be such. A visit to Mr. M. resulted in an offer “to glaze my dwelling house windows gratis.” Mr. Vicors, a very generous friend, paid the labor of painting the parsonage.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{35} Journal, respectively August 4, July 21, and May 26, 1793.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., April 14, 1793.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., March 3, 1793.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., April 7, 8, 1793.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., April 24 and May 4, 1793.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., June 12, 1793.
By the end of the year, Nov. 21, 1793, the painting and plastering had been finished. When Hammett's Conference met in the home of Captain Darrell on January 14, 1794, the Rev. Mr. Brazier "joined me and Miss D[arrell] in matrimonial bonds." 41

It is commonly understood that the Primitive Methodist Connection was largely limited to Charleston and Georgetown, South Carolina; Wilmington, North Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, and that none of the "Asbury Connection" joined him save Matthews. Actually, his movement was considerably more ambitious and widespread, and it drew into itself other Methodist Episcopal ministers. Philip Matthews was admitted on trial in 1789, and travelled for three years, being admitted into full connection and ordained deacon in 1791.42 But he withdrew at Conference in 1792. Asbury's remark that it might have been better to expel him suggests that he might already have some connection with Hammett, which his appointment (Georgetown) would have facilitated.43 Almost certainly by January 1793, he had joined forces with Hammett, for Asbury wrote in his Journal: "Mr. Matthews wrote brother D—he had been taught my iniquity to which Mr. H—(his brother) gave his sanction." This "H" could be no other than Hammett, for the "iniquity" was Asbury's failure to establish Wesley's complete authority over American Methodism.44 Hammett's Journal shows that he wrote Matthews on April 12, 1793, and received from him "two pleasing letters" on April 15, 1793, indicating that he was probably near Charleston at the time. Matthews was on hand for the first Conference of the Primitive Methodists of which we have any knowledge, in January 1794.

Indeed, Philip Matthews brought with him another young preacher of the Asbury connection, "weary of the Iron hand of despotism." This could be no other than James Johnson, who had been admitted on trial in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1793 and dismissed for "improper conduct" in 1794.45 His "improper conduct" may very well consist of attending Hammett's conference rather than his own, for he arrived in Charleston exactly on January 1, 1794, the day the South Carolina Annual Conference convened.46 Johnson (or Johnstone) was appointed to New Prov-

41 Ibid., loc. cit. Hammett is very casual about his marriage, not even bothering to give us the name of his bride. He was equally so about the birth of his first child, merely stating that his wife gave him a son, after about 11/2 to 2 hours' labor (Journal, January 14, 1794).
44 Minutes, pp. 120, 138. James Johnson's name does not appear in the 1793 appointments, but it is very likely that the "Jethro Johnson" appointed to "Washington" (Minutes, p. 116) should be James Johnson, as Jethro Johnson's appointments had consistently been in and around New Jersey.
dence, Nassau, where Primitive Methodist work already was in progress. By April plans had already been drawn up for a preaching-house 26 x 46 feet, with gallery, three doors and thirteen windows, to be built on a large lot on the corner of Augusta and Heathfield Streets. At the insistence of local authorities, Johnson had already taken the initial steps toward the founding of a school. His letter describing the building plans and financial campaign contains a deed form which names "Rev. W." and "President" of the Conference of the Primitive Methodists, with rather broad powers.

The third itinerant who had also worked with Asbury was Adam Cloud, who traveled at least from 1781 until 1787, his last appointment being Fairfax. The 1788 Minutes list him as desisting from travelling (not merely "locating"). Hammett relates his leaving the travelling ministry with the fact that in 1787, American Methodism had stricken Wesley's name from their minutes in that year. At any rate, we know that on August 1, 1795, Cloud and his family sailed for Sunbury, Georgia, where he was to organize Primitive Methodist work.

A number of those who had aided Hammett in his work in the West Indies made their way to the continent to join in his work there. Among these was William Brazier and his wife. Brazier had aided Hammett on St. Kitts, had followed him to Tortola, and had followed him to America. We are not able to follow Brazier's movements in detail, but apparently Hammett sent him to Kingston, Jamaica, probably early in 1792. Brazier and his wife returned to America, where she died about September, 1793, and Brazier was sent as a Primitive Methodist emissary to Philadelphia. For reasons unknown to us, he made overtures to the Baptists of Philadelphia, but did not join them. The estrangement this naturally caused between him and Hammett must have been patched up later, for he received title to the Trinity Church in Charleston, after the death of Hammett.

Meredith, whose first name is unknown, arrived in New York about May 1793, and probably entered into the work immediately, but we have no news of his appointment before the Conference of

47 Johnson to Hammett, April 5, 1794, Duke University Library, Hammett Papers.
48 Minutes, 31, 65, 71.
49 Hammett, Journal, June 1795.
50 Ibid., August 1, 1795.
51 Mary Smith to Hammett, Nov. 29, 1791. Duke University Library. Mary Smith sends greetings to "Br. & Sr. Brazier" in Charleston.
53 Hammett, Journal, June 3, 1793.
January 1794, when he preached "a most excellent sermon". Later he was sent as a missionary to the Bahamas, where "good is to be done, and from which there is good news of a prosperous work." Later we find Meredith at Wilmington, North Carolina, though whether as an independent preacher or still in connection with Hammett is not definite. William Capers states that Meredith "was not long satisfied with Mr. Hammett," and began an independent work among the Negroes of Wilmington. Though subjected to severe persecution, including being put into jail, having his first chapel burnt to the ground, etc., he gradually gained the confidence of the people and did a remarkable work among the colored people there. "At his death [he] willed in fee simple to Bishop Asbury a second meeting-house built on the site of the first, the parsonage-house . . . , and the lands belonging to them; all which, of course, the Bishop turned over to the Church; which, along with the property, acquired also the congregation and communicant members."

One who joined Hammett but remained with him but a few weeks was a certain Rev. Mr. Phillips, unimportant in himself, but very significant because of information which came to light during his disagreement with Hammett. Phillips was ordained by Hammett, presumably at the 1795 Conference, or perhaps earlier; he was sent to Georgetown, and his family temporarily lodged at Hammett's home in Charleston. However, after not more than a month's ministry, Phillips announced that he was separating from Hammett as he was a "freemason" and "on account of my having a slave in my possession." On February 8, 1795, Phillips attended upon Hammett's preaching in Charleston, and essayed to stay for the society meeting afterwards. Hammett made it clear that he was no longer welcome, having separated, and took steps to remove him. Phillips was ejected, but not before he called Hammett "Striker, Slave holder, Tipler, Drunkard" and other similar names. And this, wrote Hammett, of a "man whom I supported for nine weeks in my house and all his family, at my private expense: and after conferring on him two degrees of order, first a deacon, and than an Elder."

A few disaffected laymen tried to divide the Church, and even to take possession of the properties, which they found to be impossible. Hammett personally dissolved the Church, except for the Ministers and the pew renters, and then invited those who so

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54 Ibid., January 12, 1794.
55 Ibid., May 27, 1794.
57 Hammett, Journal, November 30, 1794 to February 8, 1795, passim.
desired to "renew their tickets". Of the 150 whites and 195 blacks, a total of 260 quickly rejoined him. A few apparently joined the "Episcopal Methodists"; some left the Methodist fold entirely; Hammett declared that, to his knowledge, none joined Phillips. Asbury was in Charleston at the time, and Phillips seems to have been desirous of joining him. Though they supplied him $20 to $30, Asbury found him "not clear on Original Sin; so we cannot, and dare not employ him. . . ." 59

Some other workers joined Hammett's schismatic group, and as far as his Journal goes, efforts at outreach continued. However, the disaffection of some of the workers, including some of those who had been with him the longest; his autocratic tendencies; his personal failings—all this seems to have combined to threaten the very existence of Hammett's connection. Hammett strongly objected to the autocracy of Francis Asbury, and made bold to suggest needed democratic measures which the Methodist Episcopal Church should adopt (see the Appendix in his Rejoindre); however, indications are that the Primitive Methodist Church was very much Hammett's creature. In some cases at least, he personally held the property; he was the president of the conference, did the ordaining, and evidently did the recruiting and appointing of the workers. When Phillips' defection seemed to threaten the Charleston church, Hammett merely dissolved it!

He had castigated Coke for buying slaves, but, at least by January 1795, he had become a slave holder and something of a defender of slavery in America. Then there must have been some ground for the epithets hurled at him by Phillips, namely "tipler" (sic) and "drunkard". Though it is rather doubtful that he could have continued a successful ministry if he were a drunkard, or even if he drank heavily, it is hardly reasonable to think that Phillips would have used such language if Hammett were a teetotaler. Indeed, there is the very interesting libel case involving the eccentric evangelist, Lorenzo Dow. Dow had recorded in his Journal for January 9, 1804, "It appears that he [Hammett] died drunk," and he reprinted the same in his History of a Cosmopolite, published in 1815. Benjamin Hammett, William's son, demanded a retraction; upon Dow's refusal, young Hammett sued him for criminal libel. The decision was favorable to Hammett, and Dow was convicted to twenty-four hours in jail and a fine of $1.00 and costs. "But public sympathy was so much with Dow, the officers of the court remitted the costs, and Governor Thomas Bennett pardoned him,

58 Ibid., February 15, 1795.
59 Asbury, Journal, February 9, 1795.
60 In January 1796, Hammett visited Savannah, Ga., and rented a playhouse for church service.
so that he was released in the afternoon of the same day he was convicted." 61

Within a comparatively short time after Hammett's death on May 15, 1803, most of his people were reabsorbed into the Wesleyan and Methodist Episcopal Churches. The work which seemed so flourishing in New Providence around 1795 evidently fell into ruin. Frederick Pilkington tells of the work of the colored Wesleyan missionary, William Turton, born of an old planting family in Barbados:

In 1800 he arrived in New Providence and found there an unhappy state of religious life. His mission was strenuously opposed and his character attacked because two or three persons, in the guise of Methodist preachers from Mr. Hammett (sic), had formed a society among a few black folk, and had brought the name of Methodist and the cause of truth under such suspicion that a Colonial Assembly law prohibited American and English preachers from conducting services until they held a license. This Hammet society split into two: one led by the negro Paull . . . and the other by Anthony Wallace, who appealed to Dr. Coke for a leader. William Turton, who was licensed by the Governor, was sent, and tried to undo the harm by announcing that he would receive as Wesleyan Methodists those ready to join him. 62

In South Carolina, Hammett's principal centers were Charleston and Georgetown. Asbury states in his Journal for January 28-29, 1804, "I preached in Mr. Hammett's house (in Georgetown), now fallen into our hands." 63 The Trinity Church in Charleston, which Thomas Coke considered "almost if not quite as large as our New-Chapel in London," 64 took longer. According to the deed, the property would pass to William Brazier during his lifetime, and then to the congregation. Brazier was called as pastor, but seems not to have been too acceptable to the Trinity people. He accordingly agreed to sell to the Rev. Mr. Frost, Rector of St. Philip's Episcopal Church, for $2,000. The congregation was very much alarmed by the sale, and sued for recovery. On the ground that they would have a stronger case if they could maintain peaceable possession of the property (which had already been dedicated by the Bishop and was used by Frost as an Episcopal Church), a lady of the Hammett group slipped the keys into her pocket during a service held by Frost, and the congregation literally camped in the Church until the court should decide the case. It was decided in favor of the Trinity congregation. 65

63 Asbury, Journal, loc. cit.
65 Mood, op. cit., 213.
At least as early as 1810, William M. Kennedy, Methodist Episcopal pastor in Charleston, preached once a Sunday at Trinity, in addition to his regular duties, and Trinity Church officially requested that the South Carolina Conference supply their pulpit, December 7, 1810. Another letter to the 1813 Conference was more specific; it was suggested that "a Minister Extraordinary" might be appointed, who would also preach at Trinity, which church would pay all or part of his salary. William Capers states in his Autobiography that three preachers were appointed to Charleston on the strength of this agreement. However, it proved to be a dismal failure, as Trinity Church was unable to raise the "quarterage" of eighty dollars per year, and withdrew from the agreement after the first quarter. But it was the beginning of a permanent relationship with the Episcopal Methodists. On December 12, 1813, Asbury wrote: "I preached in Trinity Church; we have it now in quiet possession."

I have been unable to determine the fate of the Hammett work in Georgia, but it was probably absorbed by the Methodist Episcopal Church.

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66 F. Pilkington, op. cit., p. 101, quotes a letter by William M. Kennedy to Thomas Coke, December 6, 1810, and published in the Methodist Magazine, 1811, p. 394, where Kennedy states: "For some months, we have given them one sermon each Lord's Day." A letter from John Gensel and John McKee to the South Carolina Conference, December 7, 1810, Archives of the Historical Society of the South Carolina Conference, United Methodist Church, Wofford College, Spartanburg, S. C.
67 John McKee and Ezekiel Torrey to the South Carolina Conference, December 17, 1812. Wofford College.