

Early American Methodism: a Key Document

by Frank Baker

ONE of the most important documents for understanding the beginnings of organized Methodism in America is the letter sent from New York to John Wesley April 11, 1768, signed "T.T." The document, its author, and its subject matter are shrouded with mystery. Some problems may never reach complete solution, but the subject is at least worthy of careful research. It is quite clear that the initials on the document stand for Thomas Taylor, for the writer speaks of himself as one of the purchasers of the land for John Street Chapel, and only Taylor's name will fit. Sometimes this man has been confused with Wesley's well-known itinerant preacher of the same name, but in fact seems to bear no relation to him.¹ He was an English Methodist layman who apparently came to America on business, reluctantly leaving behind his wife and children. He sailed from Plymouth in September, 1767, and arrived in New York October 26 that year. He was one of the eight who signed the indentures of March 29 and 30, 1768, for the purchase of the John Street land, and he subscribed his modest pound toward the building fund, but when Boardman and Pilmoor appointed permanent trustees in 1770 they were men of substance, and Taylor (if he was still in New York) was passed over.² In fact Taylor seems to have disappeared from the American scene, nor can his trail be picked up in his native land, where he presumably rejoined his family. It may well be, as Seaman suggests, that Taylor was the "friend gone to England" who supplied the New York preacher's house with "6 China Soup plates, pr. Salts, and Bread Basket," though on the other hand the Mrs. Taylor who lent other furnishings to the house may have been his wife, rejoining him from England, a theory partly confirmed by the presence of a member of his name in New York in 1796. But the name is so common that guesses are hazardous.³ Thomas Taylor remains one of the least known yet most important figures in early Methodist history, for it was his letter which finally launched Wesley on an organized crusade to recruit men and money for America.

¹ The belief that "T.T." was an Irishman (see W. C. Barclay's *Early American Methodism* (New York, 1949), I:15) is probably based on this confusion, for the preacher Thomas Taylor spent much of his early ministry in Ireland, and in fact

was there during the years 1768-70 when his namesake was in America.

² Samuel A. Seaman: *Annals of New York Methodism* (New York, 1892), pp. 32, 414-9.

³ Seaman, op. cit., 436, 460-1.

The letter itself also presents problems. The original seems long since to have disappeared, though of this we cannot be sure. Most writers who have used it have quoted extracts only, for it is a lengthy document. Strangely enough, even those few who have purported to present the original document in its entirety have failed to do so. There are two main versions which are not only different from but independent of each other. Each has been reproduced several times, but they do not appear to have been collated. The earlier version preserved the original more accurately, but is incomplete; the later version, though apparently complete, suffers (for the purist) from numerous editorial revisions. It seems clear that in the absence of the original document it must be reconstructed from these two versions, and this is here attempted.

The first appearance of the letter in print was in 1802, in the rare *Appendix* to Charles Atmore's *Methodist Memorial*, published the previous year. The *Appendix* deals specifically with American Methodism, and Atmore discovered the letter just in time to include it in small print on the closing four pages (pp. 579-82). He introduces it thus: "In examining the papers of my late venerable friend Mr. Hopper, I providentially met with the following letter; and as the account I have given of the introduction of Methodism on the Continent of America, is thereby corroborated, and more minutely described, I concluded it would be acceptable to my readers, and have therefore added it to the Appendix. I should have given it a place in the Introduction, but that sheet was printed off before I received it. It is subscribed T.T. and was sent, I presume, to Mr. Wesley."

It is clear from the last sentence that the document before Atmore contained no address, which to a casual modern reader would suggest that the envelope had been lost. Wesley and his contemporaries did not use envelopes, however, but wrote the address on the outside of the notepaper used for their letters. Even when a letter was delivered by hand, as may have been the case here, it was normal to write at least the recipient's name on the outside fold or "cover." Occasionally the letter occupied only the first of four pages, and the address the last, so that tearing the document in two preserved the letter intact but divorced it from the address. This is unlikely in the present case, the lengthy letter having almost certainly been written on three sides of a large sheet folded into two, with the address on the fourth. It seems clear that the document discovered by Atmore was not the original letter but a copy, although details of orthography and style suggest that it was a very faithful copy dating from the same period as the letter itself.

We naturally wonder why it was found among the papers of Christopher Hopper, who had died March 5, 1802, just in time for Atmore to include it in his *Appendix*. The answer to this question

throws light on an obscure chapter in the story of American Methodism. Wesley was already interested in the varying fortunes of evangelical religion in America, through his contacts with Whitefield and others. But this letter fired off a train of concerned activity. It arrived during the summer of 1768, and he presented its challenge to his preachers at the following Conference, which was held at Bristol in August. We know from his unpublished journal that Joseph Pilmoor was "deeply impressed with a longing desire to visit America." Having planted the seed, Wesley left it to mature in his preachers' minds until the following Conference. Doubtless others besides Pilmoor were "frequently under great exercise of mind respecting the dear Americans."⁴

Wesley was not content to leave Taylor's plea there, however, particularly after it had been reinforced by the personal visit of Dr. Wrangel, who emphasized the opportunities and needs in Philadelphia also. Taylor's letter seems to have remained his focal point. The model Methodist deed requested by Taylor may have been sent immediately, or it may have waited until Wesley's missionaries could personally deal with it the following year. Samples of his active concern for America that winter may be seen in a letter to Christopher Hopper on January 5, 1769: "If Joseph Cownley or you have a mind to step over to New York, I will not say you nay. I believe it would help your own health and help many precious souls." This was not quite recruiting—such would hardly have been smiled upon in view of the desperate needs of British Methodism! —but it was very near to it. It was as a result of that same attitude that Robert Williams left his circuit of Castlebar at a moment's notice, confident that Wesley's prior agreement that he could serve in America would also cover his hasty departure. As a result he arrived two months before the officially designated missionaries.⁵

As with men, so with money. On February 6, 1769, Wesley wrote to another of his preachers, Robert Costerdine: "If you read publicly on any Sunday that letter from New York, you may then receive what the hearers are willing to give. I am not at all sorry that our brother Southwell purposes settling at New York."⁶ Wesley was obviously keeping "that letter from New York" well in the public eye, and just as Costerdine clearly had a copy to read throughout his circuit in order to arouse sympathy, so had Chris-

⁴ John P. Lockwood: *The Western Pioneers* (London, 1881), p. 56.

⁵ For Williams see *History of American Methodism* (Nashville, 1964), I:91-3, 126.

⁶ "John Southwell, merchant," appears as one of the seven original trustees named in the John Street deed of No-

vember 2, 1770, though within a few years he left the province. (Seaman, op. cit., pp. 33-4.) He was probably related to Sergeant Southwell of Kendal, whom Costerdine, a Lancashire man, would know. (See Wesley's *Journal* for March 21, 1767.)

topher Hopper and others. It seems that Wesley had sent copies, in fact, to all forty of his "Assistants," the preachers in charge of the British circuits. Costerdine was the Assistant at Sheffield, Hopper at Birstall, Cownley at Newcastle. Others who read it to their societies and thus were subjected to a constant renewal of its challenge to them personally were Richard Boardman in the Yorkshire Dales, Thomas Rankin in West Cornwall, and Francis Asbury at Colchester. It was to a prepared Conference at Leeds that Wesley made his appeal in the opening days of August, 1769. Boardman and Pilmoor were but the official first fruits among the preachers, representatives of a widespread concern.⁷ Their passages were paid for by the gifts of their colleagues, augmented by collections in various parts of the country, at least some of them made in response to Taylor's letter. Indeed although Taylor pleaded first for the men, merely hinted at payment of their passage, and argued against English collections for the New York building, in fact fifty pounds was contributed towards the debt—one-twelfth of the cost of the property, or alternatively one-twelfth of the cost of the building.⁸

We can readily understand that if indeed Hopper's copy of Taylor's letter was one of several prepared at Wesley's behest for purposes of propaganda it would probably not be complete. A lengthy autobiographical section and a brief reference to Whitefield's Orphan House at Savannah as a true Methodist preaching-house were foreign to the purpose of such a document. The address and the closing salutations were unnecessary. All these are missing from Atmore's copy, as they probably were from the other copies made at the time, and as they are from the writings of those historians who have reproduced Taylor's letter from Atmore.⁹ We are the more grateful that the fuller original version has also survived, though apparently in a revised form.

This fuller version seems first to have appeared in print in volume six of the monthly *Methodist Magazine* published in New York—the

⁷ Writing about this Conference John Pawson said: "Several of the brethren offered to go, if I would go along with them." (*Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, ed. T. Jackson, 4th edn., London, 1872, 4:37.)

⁸ *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences* (London, 1862), I:86; Pilmoor's Journal shows that the money contributed by the preachers themselves was augmented by the circuits (cf. Lockwood, *op. cit.*, p. 63.) As the Rev. Arthur Bruce Moss has pointed out to me, although the English contribution was designated in the

Minutes as "towards the payment of their debt," it went into the current account, and was thus applied to the general expenses of building. The gift was sent partly in gold, partly in books for sale. (See Seaman, *op. cit.*, p. 35.)

⁹ John S. Simon, in *John Wesley the Master Builder* (London, 1927), pp. 228-31; Barclay, *op. cit.*, I:15-17, though he uses not Atmore but a secondary source, William Crook's *Ireland and the Centenary of American Methodism* (London, 1866), pp. 104-11.

forerunner of the *Methodist Quarterly Review*. The issue for October 1823 contains an unsigned article on the "Introduction of Methodism into the United States." After emphasizing the work of Philip Embury and Captain Webb the author gives two brief extracts from Taylor's letter. Pages 427-31 of the November issue present the letter in full, apart from the extracts already quoted. There is no reference to any previous publication, and although the document is fuller than Atmore's version, the signature remains as "T.T." There are several differences in the styling, all in the direction of making it conform to early nineteenth century literary practice. This is true not only in matters of spelling, capitalization, italicizing, and punctuation; there are even variations in vocabulary and phraseology. Careful collation makes it certain that this is an example of a somewhat free nineteenth century editorial revision of a fuller version of the document which twenty years earlier Atmore had printed on the whole more faithfully, though with one unfortunate error in transcription, where his eye had slipped from "pounds" on one line to "pounds" on another, without transcribing the intervening words.

Nathan Bangs, as senior book agent and editor of the magazine, was ultimately responsible for the article, and may well himself have written it. The subject interested him greatly, and he had just begun to write his *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, of which the manuscript, together with related material, was destroyed in a fire in 1836.¹⁰ In volume one of the *History*, re-written and published in 1838, Bangs quotes the Taylor letter in full (pp. 52-58), seemingly from the 1823 *Magazine*, though with some minor variations.¹¹ Although on the face of it Bangs seems the most likely author of the article, Abel Stevens spoke of it as "attributed to Rev. Dr. P. P. Sandford."¹² Whoever in fact wrote the article, the same person presumably prepared the letter for the press, but whether from the original which had somehow found its way back to America, from a copy made by Taylor himself, or from some other copy, it is at present impossible to say. All we can be sure of is that this version

¹⁰ Bangs, *History* (New York, 1838-41), I:4. Apparently the "T.T." letter did not disappear on that occasion, for in 1859 John Lednum referred to "a manuscript copy" of it, apparently the one reproduced in the 1823 *Magazine*, as in his possession. (*History of the Rise of Methodism in America*, p. 28.)

¹¹ In the complete form of the letter he includes the revised phrase about Captain Webb "felling trees on Long Island," which sounds like physical labour rather than the symbolic work of

striking sinners to the ground which Webb's phrase about "felling the trees" surely implied. On p. 59, however, Bangs uses the latter phrase, though it is doubtful how to interpret this clue in unravelling the problems surrounding the letter.

¹² *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1864), I:63. Although Stevens knew both versions of the letter he used Atmore's as his basic authority, vide I:55, 57, 63, 66, but cf. p. 82.

is fuller than Atmore's but apparently less reliable in the reproduction of minor details of style.¹³

Problems surround both Taylor and his letter, and we naturally wonder about the value of his testimony. In general it can confidently be asserted that this is indeed the genuine work of an observant and intelligent contemporary. In matters of detail it reflects normal human certainty about some events, such as the date of his own arrival in New York, but admirable caution about others, where he has sensed some vagueness in his informants. He seems convinced that Embury's public preaching began "eighteen months ago," but speaks of Webb's arrival as "about fourteen months ago." The validity of these statements, the one positive, the other approximate, may be checked by his correct references to Webb's conversion as "about three years since" (it was in fact three and a half years earlier), to Whitefield's arrival "thirty years ago," and to "his visit fourteen or fifteen years ago" (in 1754, i.e., fourteen years earlier). Both versions continue with a reference to Whitefield's "last journey, about fourteen years since." This comes so strangely after the previous reference to "fourteen or fifteen years ago," and is so wildly inaccurate, that it must be a slip either by writer or copyist for "four"; in fact Whitefield's most recent tour had lasted from the summer of 1763 to that of 1765, so that the "four years" takes us to the middle of his outstandingly successful summer of 1764.¹⁴ Allowing for human error, therefore, we can be fairly certain of the accuracy of Taylor's account as far as he and his informants understood the situation. In drawing any deductions from it, however, we must remember that the unheralded Methodist activities in the backwoods of Virginia or Maryland made no impact on New York, so that Taylor's silence about Strawbridge holds even less significance than his silence about Philadelphia. The real importance of his letter is that it gives us a detailed contemporary account of the rise of Methodism in New York, and for that at least we must remain grateful.

In reproducing Taylor's letter I have used Atmore's *Appendix* to furnish the basic text, referring to it in the notes as "1802." From the *Methodist Magazine* I have added the missing passages and noted the major variant readings, referring to this text as "1823." I have modernized the italicization, capitalization, punctuation, and orthography, but have neither added, omitted, altered nor rearranged any words. I can only hope that one day my attempt

¹³ Seaman, *op. cit.*, gives the document as Appendix F, pp. 448-53. Although his introduction refers to Atmore's discovery, in fact he reprints the 1823 version, though without identifying his source.

¹⁴ Dr. L. R. Streeter, in his Review [of the] *Question of Priority* (1924), p. 19, is surely wrong in treating this as a "manifest exaggeration."

to reproduce this key document will be rendered out of date by the discovery of the original.

New York, 11th April, 1768

Rev. and very Dear Sir,

I intended writing to you for several weeks past, but a few of us had a very material transaction in view. I therefore postponed writing until I could give you a particular account thereof. This was the purchasing of ground for building a preaching-house upon, which by the blessing of God we have now concluded. But before I proceed I shall give you a short account of the state of religion in this city. By the best intelligence I can collect there was little either of the form or power of it till¹⁵ Mr. Whitefield came over thirty years ago; and even after his first and second visit¹⁶ there appeared but little fruit of his labours. But during his visit fourteen or fifteen years ago there was a considerable shaking among the dry bones. Divers were savingly converted, and this work was much increased in his last journey, about four¹⁷ years since, when his words were really as a hammer and as a fire.¹⁸ Most part of the adults were stirred up, great numbers pricked to the heart, and by a judgment of charity several found peace and joy in believing. The consequence of this work was, the¹⁹ churches were crowded and subscriptions raised for building new ones. Mr. Whitefield's example provoked most of the ministers to a much greater degree of earnestness. And by the multitudes of people young and old,²⁰ rich and poor, flocking to the churches, religion became an honourable profession—there was no²¹ outward cross to be taken up therein. Nay, a person who could not speak about the grace of God and the new birth was esteemed unfit for genteel company. But in a while, instead of pressing forward and growing in grace (as he exhorted them) the generality were pleading for the remains of sin, and the necessity of being in darkness. They esteemed their opinions as the very essentials of Christianity, and regarded not holiness either of heart or life.

The above appears to me to be a genuine account of the state of religion in New York eighteen months ago, when it pleased God to rouse up Mr. Embury to employ his talent (which for several years had been as it were hid²² in a napkin) by calling sinners to repentance and exhorting believers to let their light shine before men. He spoke at first only in his own house. A few were soon col-

¹⁵ 1823, "until."

fire."

¹⁶ 1823, "visits."

¹⁸ 1823 omits "the."

¹⁷ As noted above, both 1802 and 1823 contain the error "fourteen."

²⁰ 1823, "people, old and young."

¹⁸ 1823, "like a hammer and like a

²¹ 1823, "there was now."

²² 1823, "been hid as it were."

lected together and joined in²³ a little society—chiefly his own countrymen, Irish.²⁴ In about three months after brother White and brother Sause²⁵ from Dublin joined them. They then rented an empty room in their neighbourhood, which was in the most infamous street of²⁶ the city, adjoining the barracks. For some time few thought it worth their while to hear. But God so ordered it by His providence that about fourteen months ago Captain Webb, barrack master at Albany (who was converted about three years since at Bristol)²⁷ found them out and preached in his regimentals. The novelty of a man preaching in a scarlet coat soon brought greater numbers to hear than the room could contain. But his doctrines were quite new to the hearers, for he told them point blank “that all their knowledge and profession of religion²⁸ was²⁹ not worth a rush unless their sins were forgiven and they had the ‘witness of God’s spirit with theirs, that they were the children of God.’”³⁰ This strange doctrine, with some peculiarities in his person, made him soon be³¹ taken notice of, and obliged the little society to look out for a larger house to preach in. They soon found a place that had been built for a rigging-house, sixty feet in length and eighteen in breadth.

About this period Mr. Webb, whose wife’s relations lived at Jamaica on Long Island, took a house in that neighborhood, and began to preach in his own house and several other places on Long Island. Within six months about twenty-four persons received justifying grace, near³² half of them whites, the rest Negroes. While Mr. Webb (to borrow his own phrase) was “felling the trees on Long Island,”³³ brother Embury was exhorting all who attended on Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings and evenings³⁴ at the rigging-house to flee from the wrath to come. His hearers began to increase, and some gave heed to his report, about the time the gracious providence of God brought me safe to New York after a very favourable passage of six weeks from Plymouth. It was the 26th day of October last when I arrived, recommended to a person for lodging. I inquired of my host (who was a very religious man) if any Methodists were in New York. He informed me³⁵ there was one Captain Webb, a strange sort of man, who lived on Long Island and sometimes preached³⁶ at one Embury’s at the rigging-

²³ 1823, “into.”

²⁴ 1823, “Irish Germans.”

²⁵ 1823, “Souse.”

²⁶ 1823, “in.”

²⁷ 1823 omits “about.”

²⁸ 1823 omits “profession of.”

²⁹ Bangs, *op. cit.*, “were.”

³⁰ The internal quotation points were added in 1823.

³¹ 1823 omits “be.”

³² 1823, “nearly.”

³³ 1823 inserts the parentheses to replace commas, and omits “the” from “felling the trees.”

³⁴ 1802, “Thursday evenings, and Sunday morning and evenings”; 1823, “Thursday evenings, and Sundays, morning and evening.”

³⁵ 1823, “he answered, that.”

³⁶ 1823, “and who sometimes preached.”

house. In a few days I found out Embury. I soon found what spirit he was of,³⁷ and that he was personally acquainted with you and your doctrines, and had been³⁸ a Helper in Ireland. He had formed two classes, one of the men and another³⁹ of the women, but had never met the society apart from the congregation, although there were six or seven men and about the same number of women⁴⁰ who had a clear sense of their acceptance in the Beloved.

You will not wonder at my being agreeably surprised in meeting with a few here who have been and desire again to be in connection with you. God only knows the weight of the affliction I felt in leaving⁴¹ my native country. But I have reason now to conclude God intended all for my good.⁴² Ever since I left London my load has been removed and I have found a cheerfulness in being banished from all near and dear to me, and I made a new covenant with my God that I would go to the utmost parts of the earth provided He would raise up a people with whom I might join in His praise. On the great deep I found a more earnest desire to be united with the people of God than ever before. I made a resolution that God's people should be my people, and their God my God, and (bless His holy name!) I have since experienced more heartfelt happiness than ever I thought it possible to have on this side eternity. All anxious care even about my dear wife and children is taken away. I cannot assist them, but I daily and hourly commend them to God in prayer, and I know He hears my prayers, by an answer of love in my heart. I find power daily to devote myself unto Him, and I find power also to overcome sin. If any uneasiness at all affects me, it is because I can speak so little of so good a God.

Mr. Embury has lately been⁴³ more zealous than formerly, the consequence of which is that he is more lively in preaching, and his gifts as well as graces are much increased. Great numbers of serious people⁴⁴ came to hear God's word as for their lives. And their numbers increased so fast that our house for this six weeks past would not contain the half of the people.⁴⁵

We had some consultations how to remedy this inconvenience, and Embury proposed renting a lot⁴⁶ of ground for twenty-one years, and to exert our utmost endeavours to collect as much money as to build⁴⁷ a wooden tabernacle. A piece of ground was proposed, the ground rent was agreed for, and the lease was to be executed in a few days. We, however, in the mean time, had two several

³⁷ 1823, "of what spirit he was."

⁴³ 1823, "Mr. Embury lately, has been."

³⁸ 1823, "and that he had been."

⁴⁴ 1823, "serious persons."

³⁹ 1823, "the other."

⁴⁵ 1823, "contain half the people."

⁴⁰ 1823, "and as many women."

⁴⁶ 1823, "a small lot."

⁴¹ 1823, "of affliction I felt on leaving."

⁴⁷ 1823 omits "to collect as much

⁴² The following section, to the end of the paragraph, is found only in 1823.

money as."

days for fasting and prayer for the direction of God and His blessing on our proceedings—and Providence opened such a door as we had no expectation of. A young man, a sincere Christian and constant hearer, though not joined in society, would not give anything towards this house, but offered⁴⁸ ten pounds to buy a lot of ground, [and] went of his own accord to a lady who had two lots to sell, on one of which there is a house that rents for eighteen pounds per annum. He found the purchase money of the two lots was six hundred pounds, which she was willing should remain in the purchaser's hands⁴⁹ on good security. We called once more upon⁵⁰ God for His direction, and resolved to purchase the whole. There are eight of us, who are joint purchasers, among whom Mr. Webb and Mr. Lupton are men of property. I was determined the house should be on the same footing as the Orphan House at Newcastle and others in England, but as we were ignorant how to draw the deeds we purchased for us and our heirs until a copy of the writings from England was sent us,⁵¹ which we desire may be sent by the first opportunity.⁵²

⁴⁸ 1823, "not giving anything towards this house, offered."

⁴⁹ 1823, "purchaser's possession."

⁵⁰ 1823, "on."

⁵¹ 1823, "until a copy of the writing is sent us from England."

⁵² Although it was not my intention to supply explanatory footnotes, it seems desirable here to say a few words about the problem of the transfer of the John Street property. The land was originally sold by Mary Barclay, widow of the Rev. Henry Barclay, second rector of Trinity Church, to Philip Embury and others, for 600 pounds. The method used was the normal contemporary one of lease and release by two indentures on adjacent days. Yet in 1770 this land was sold to a slightly different group of trustees by a hitherto unnamed person, Joseph Forbes, also by the normal method of lease and release, though the first indenture, dated 1st November 1770, has so far not been found—not, perhaps, looked for.

It seems clear that Taylor's unnamed "young man" was in fact Forbes, and that he persuaded Mrs. Barclay to sell the land without receiving the money, provided that there was "good security." Maybe Forbes pleaded that his own business as a cordwainer was sufficient security while his Methodist friends were

trying to raise the money. He seems deliberately to have kept himself in the background, serving as a catalyst for the purchase of the property. Here is another unknown who deserves more credit than he has so far received. (Cf. Seaman, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-9.) The Rev. Arthur Bruce Moss informs me that he has had enquiries from an apparent descendant of Forbes, who according to an old family letter "moved to Ohio when it was a wilderness" and "died when about 46 years old, of apoplexy, and is buried near Oxford, Ohio."

Forbes had little difficulty in securing the financial support of Thomas Webb and Webb's former comrade-in-arms William Lupton, who seem to have advanced 300 and 200 pounds respectively, so that the society remained indebted to two of their own. (No full analysis of the early financial accounts of John Street has been published, and contradictory reports of the loans made by Webb and Lupton have appeared. Nor is it quite certain that all the money they advanced in 1768 was for the land; some of it may well have been for the building operations.) Yet at some time and in some way they and their fellow-trustees signed away their legal rights over the property to Forbes, to receive them again in 1770 (with different colleagues this time) on

Before we began to talk of building the devil and his children were very peaceable, but since this affair took place many ministers have cursed us in the name of the Lord, and laboured with all their might to shut up their congregations from assisting us.⁵³ But He that sitteth in Heaven⁵⁴ laughed them to scorn. Many have broke through and given their friendly assistance. We have collected above one hundred pounds more than⁵⁵ our own contributions, and have reason to hope in the whole we shall have two hundred pounds: but the house will cost us four hundred pounds more,⁵⁶ so that unless God is pleased to raise up friends we shall yet be at a loss. I believe Mr. Webb and Lupton⁵⁷ will borrow or advance two hundred pounds rather than the building should not go forward,

a trust prepared in accordance with the model deed supplied by Wesley. When and how did Forbes come into possession of the property?

The exact process by which the land passed from the old trustees via Forbes to the new trustees remains obscure and may never be known. It is clear that several documents have disappeared, including the instrument whereby the old trustees surrendered their rights, which may well have been the document signed by David Embury on behalf of his brother Philip in August, 1770. (Seaman, *op. cit.*, p. 437.) I would suggest that the process becomes clearer if we visualize two other missing documents: (a) a bond whereby Joseph Forbes guaranteed 600 pounds to Mrs. Barclay when and how she required it, and (b) some kind of mortgage of the property to Forbes by the trustees as security against this bond. By the 1770 deed the new trustees secured not only the property but "all deeds, evidences, and writings which in any way or manner relate thereunto." These would include the bond (surrendered by Mrs. Barclay on receipt of her 600 pounds) and the mortgage, and both of these were likely to be destroyed as furnishing proofs only of discharged obligations rather than of title. That these hypothetical documents once existed finds some confirmation in evidence which I discovered only after becoming convinced that this must be the solution of at least part of the problem. In discussing the cost of the land Seaman's *Annals* (p. 52n) records an entry of one of the debts outstanding

in July, 1768: "To the Widow Bartley, as per mortgage and bond given, six hundred pounds." Webb and Lupton apparently advanced the bulk of the money to repay this debt, on the security of notes upon which the trustees long continued to pay interest. The Rev. Arthur Bruce Moss informs me that 100 pounds, together with interest from September 1768, was repaid to Webb in January 1770. Forbes also seems to have advanced money, possibly 100 pounds, but in his case upon the security of the early mortgage on the property. Certainly in 1770 he possessed the legal title, and disposed of it to the new trustees not for any named sum representing the capital and interest owing to him, but for a nominal ten shillings in addition to "divers good and valuable considerations." I hazard the guess that these "valuable considerations" consisted mainly of a grant of land in Ohio, negotiated by Thomas Webb on behalf of the trustees. Very much more research and careful analysis of the situation needs to be done before the mysteries of the early years of John Street Methodism are fully elucidated, if indeed they ever are.

⁵³ 1823, "stop up their congregations"; Bangs, *op. cit.*, "stop their congregations."

⁵⁴ 1823, "in the highest."

⁵⁵ 1823, "above one hundred pounds above"; Bangs, *op. cit.*, as 1802.

⁵⁶ 1802 omits "but the house will cost us four hundred pounds."

⁵⁷ 1823, "Mr. Lupton."

but the interest of money here is a great burden, which is seven per cent.⁵⁸ Some of our brethren proposed writing to you for a collection in England, but I was averse to this, as I well knew⁵⁹ our friends there are overburdened already. Yet so far I would earnestly beg: if you would intimate our circumstances to particular persons of ability perhaps God would open their hearts to assist this infant society and contribute to the first preaching-house on the original Methodist plan in all America—excepting Mr. Whitefield's Orphan House in Georgia.⁶⁰ But I shall write no more on this head.⁶¹

There is another point far more material, and in which I must importune your assistance not only in my own name but⁶² in the name of the whole society. We want an able, experienced preacher⁶³—one who has both gifts and graces⁶⁴ necessary for the work. God has not despised⁶⁵ the day of small things. There is a real work in many hearts⁶⁶ by the preaching of Mr. Webb and Mr. Embury, but although they are both useful, and their hearts in the work, they want many qualifications necessary for such an undertaking, where they have none to direct them.⁶⁷ And the progress of the gospel here depends much on the qualifications of the preachers.⁶⁸

I have thought of Mr. Helton, for if possible⁶⁹ we must have a man of wisdom, of sound faith, and a good disciplinarian, one whose heart and soul are in the work; and I doubt not but by the goodness of God such a flame would⁷⁰ be soon kindled as would never stop until it reached the great South Sea. We may make many shifts to evade temporal inconveniences, but we cannot purchase⁷¹ such a preacher as I have described. Dear sir, I entreat you for the good of thousands to use your utmost endeavours to send one over. I would advise him to take shipping at Bristol, Liverpool, or Dublin, in the month of July or early in August; by embarking at this season he will have fine weather in his passage and probably arrive here in the month of September. He will see with his own eyes⁷² before winter what progress the gospel has made. With respect to the money for payment of a preacher's passage⁷³ over, if they could not procure it, we would sell our coats and shirts and pay it.⁷⁴

⁵⁸ 1823, "—being seven per cent."

⁵⁹ 1823, "know."

⁶⁰ The closing phrase occurs only in 1823, in parentheses.

⁶¹ 1823, "on this subject."

⁶² 1823, "but also."

⁶³ 1823, "able and experienced."

⁶⁴ 1823, "grace."

⁶⁵ 1823, "not, indeed, despised."

⁶⁶ 1823, "a real work of grace begun in many hearts."

⁶⁷ 1823 omits "necessary" and "where

they have none to direct them."

⁶⁸ 1823, "upon the qualifications of preachers."

⁶⁹ 1823, "In regard to a Preacher. If possible."

⁷⁰ Bangs, op. cit., "will."

⁷¹ 1823 omits italics.

⁷² 1823 omits "with his own eyes."

⁷³ 1823, "With respect to money for the payment of the preacher's passage."

⁷⁴ 1823, "sell . . . shirts to procure it for them."

I most earnestly beg an interest in your prayers, and trust you and many of our brethren will not forget the church in this wilderness.⁷⁵

I remain with sincere esteem, Rev. and Dear Sir,
Your very affectionate brother and servant,
T. T.

⁷⁵ 1802 ends at this point.