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**LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY CHILDS**  
**For Twenty-Three Years An Itinerant Methodist Minister**

By John Ellis Edwards,  
Of The Virginia Conference  
Of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South

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**A WORD OF CAUTION ABOUT THIS BOOK**

In the next to the last paragraph of the author's part of this book, he writes as follows:

"We have followed the subject of this biography through the whole period of his earthly  
existence. We have seen his early training -- we have witnessed his conversion to God -- his  
connection with the church -- his call to the ministry, and have pursued him through twenty-three  
years of ministerial and pastoral labor, in the midst of the ever-changing scenes of the Methodist  
itinerant life. We have seen his fidelity -- his conscientiousness -- his incessant toil. We have read

the private conflicts of his spiritual life -- we have examined his peculiar views, in the light of his own explanations -- we have seen him die. Are there not many things worthy of our imitation? May we not derive some very important lessons from his life?"

The answer to both of the author's questions is "Yes":-- "Yes, A number of things in the life of John Wesley Childs are worthy of imitation." "Yes, some important lessons can be derived from his life." However, in spite of the fact that he lived a deeply devout and godly life, and in spite of the fact that he died with great peace, assurance, and triumph, his life is not a good example of how to seek, obtain, and retain the second work of grace. Readers will see why there is reason to believe that John Wesley Childs obtained the experience, but certain of his extreme persuasions were a great hindrance to his being a clear witness of this grace, and the accounts of his efforts to obtain perfect love may prove more damaging than helpful to those needing light on this subject. Thus, this volume is not recommended for those who need clarification on how to seek, obtain, and retain the second work of grace.

John Wesley Childs seems to have been a commentary more on "How Not To Seek The Experience of Entire Sanctification," than vice versa. His faith seems to have been placed unconsciously, and too much, upon what he must DO to be holy, rather than upon what Christ DID to make him holy through His cleansing blood. Thus, sadly, even a short while before his death, as if he had not yet been sanctified wholly, John Wesley Childs said: "I long for holiness, for purity; it is this that I pant after more than for gold or silver, or the cattle on a thousand hills." To will was present with him, but how to perform that which would bring him into the abiding assurance of heart purity he knew not. Still, it may have been a mental block that did nothing more than keep his mind in doubt that he possessed the experience which his heart had grasped years earlier and retained ever since.

The life of this man is an interesting study, but one that is rather hard to define. That he was extreme in some of his notions does not seem difficult to decide. Yet, he cannot be defined as a typical legalist, for beyond expressing his views he did not try to force others into his mold and lash out at those who rejected his persuasions. If he was a legalist, he was his own greatest victim. As a Christian he was harder on himself than he was on others. Though his confidence to claim the experience of entire sanctification seems to have been very small, yet he seems to have manifested much of the fruit of pure heart -- and, he felt that he did walk in the experience for a while, one or more times. I suspect that he may have done so from the time that he first entered into the second rest until the moment of his death.

Taken as a whole, this biography presents an interesting character study -- one that could be valuable from several standpoints, regardless of the opinions at which the reader may arrive about some of the views and practices of John Wesley Childs. Regardless of how he should be defined as a Christian, it is clear from the accounts of his death-bed conversations and testimonies that John Wesley Childs "died the death of the righteous," in great peace, assurance, and triumph.  
-- DVM

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PREFACE

The following biography has been prepared at the suggestion of the friends of the deceased, and with an earnest desire to do good by its publication. If it shall meet with a favorable reception, and the publisher shall find the sale of it profitable, then the widow and children of the deceased will be allowed a suitable remuneration for the copyright. Since the sum which the widow will receive for the copyright depends upon the sale of the book, we hope that a generous public will give it a cordial reception.

The author has no interest whatever in the proceeds of the sale; these are, in part at least, to accrue to Mr. Childs' family, for whose benefit, so far as a pecuniary consideration is concerned, it has been prepared. But the main object has been to do good, by laying before the public the life of one of the holiest men that has ever lived.

In the preparation of this work, the author has, in some instances, been at a loss for material to supply certain connecting links in the chain of events making up the life of the subject of this memoir; but he has done the best he could with the materials in hand, and has chosen rather to present certain portions of his life in a disjointed manner, than to supply the connection from the imagination, or from unsatisfactory sources of information.

The author takes this occasion to acknowledge his indebtedness to Mrs. E. B. Early, of Lynchburg, Virginia, wife of the Rev. John Early, D. D., for her kindness in collecting material for the biography, and in arranging Mr. Childs' correspondence for publication.

The book has been prepared under the pressure of bodily afflictions, and amid frequent interruptions from various causes; but, as the great object of the author has been to do good, and not to gain celebrity in authorship, it is now submitted to the public without any other concern than that which arises from the desire that it may prove successful in the mission on which it is sent.

The Author  
Norfolk, Virginia, April 1, 1852

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## LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY CHILDS

### Chapter 1 INTRODUCTORY

Advantages of biography -- Especially religious biography -- An account of the general  
habits of Mr. Childs -- A description of his person and manners -- Extract of a letter from Mrs.  
Childs

Biography is attracting a very large share of attention in the present day. Some of the best  
writers of the age have devoted their pens to this department of literature. The illustrious dead of  
past generations have been summoned again to the stage of life, to teach the living by their  
example, to instruct by their wisdom, and to warn by their errors. This is well. It is meet that the  
principles, the sayings, and the recorded sentiments of the departed should be rescued from the  
wave of time that bears them to oblivion, and preserved in such a form as shall render them  
sources of useful instruction to future generations. It admits of a doubt whether any department of  
literature is exerting so great an amount of influence upon the formation of character, as biography.  
The young are fond of the lives of those who have distinguished themselves in the cabinet, the  
field, the forum, the studio, and the pulpit.

There is no class of books sought after with greater avidity, or read with greater eagerness,  
than memoirs, remains, biographical sketches, and extended lives of those not unknown to fame.  
Thousands of the youths of our own and of other lands have been stimulated to vigorous effort, in  
their exertions to obtain an education, by the example of a Franklin. Men of letters and science  
have been nerved for study by the recorded habits of thought and investigation of a Newton and a  
Leibnitz. Ambitious young men have been urged forward in the pursuit of military fame by the lives  
of such men as Washington, Alexander, Bonaparte, and Taylor. While thousands upon thousands,  
in the church, have felt the influence of the published biographies of such men as the sainted  
Fletcher, the learned Whitby, the pious Henry, and the critical Dr. Adam Clarke, in leading them to



a more patient study of the Holy Scriptures, and to more laborious and self-sacrificing efforts to make known to the world the rich and inexhaustible treasures of knowledge contained in the sacred word.

There is yet another class of persons whose lives have exerted a still more widely extended influence upon the great masses of the ministry and laity of the church, and upon the world, than any yet mentioned. We allude to such men as Henry Martyn, Brainerd, Legh Richmond, Carvosso, David Stoner, Harlan Page, Samuel Hick, and John Howard; and such women as Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, Sarah Martin, and others of a similar type of character, whose lives have led hundreds of thousands of men and women to habits of closer communion with God, to plans of more extended usefulness, and to more indomitable energy and untiring zeal in their labors for the universal diffusion of gospel light and truth in all the world.

The benefits, therefore, resulting from biography can be neither few nor small. The state derives advantages from the lives of wise and far-seeing statesmen, whose views of state policy are enlarged and sound, and from the biographies of able and profound jurists, who have devoted the study of many years to the intricacies of the law. The higher departments of literature derive benefit from the life-pictures of men eminent for learning, drawn by skillful hands. In a word, all the departments of society embraced in the learned professions, the mechanical arts, the commercial and agricultural pursuits of life, receive immense benefit from biography. Lessons of patience under painful reverses of fortune; lessons of courage in the midst of appalling difficulties and discouragements; lessons of resignation under bereavement, and lessons of fortitude under the trials and dangers incident to our probation in this world, may all be learned from the histories of those who have trod the path of life before us.

While it is profitable and proper, therefore, that the lives of men should be preserved for the benefit of the state, and for the advancement of learning, and for the improvement of the arts, it is especially proper that they should be embodied in a permanent form for the benefit of the church. The lives of great reformers have their use, such as Luther, Knox, and Wesley; the lives of learned theologians, such as Arminius, Calvin, Stackhouse, Watson, Hall, and Dwight; the lives of able and eloquent preachers and expounders of the word in the pulpit, such as Bascom, Chalmers, McCheyne, Summerfield, and others of the same class. But still there is that other class of persons referred to above, whose lives are no less valuable to the church than those to whom we have just alluded. We mean that class of men and women who may rather be denominated good and useful than learned, brilliant, and profound. They are found in the laity as well as in the ministry of all the churches. They are such as have been eminent for piety, for faith and good works; such as have displayed more than ordinary zeal for the promotion of God's cause on earth; such as have thought but little of themselves, humble, laborious, experimental Christians, who have made the world better for having had a residence in it.

While the lives of others may have a tendency to make great men, these have a tendency to make good and useful men. These latter send out an influence for God and his cause, all along the quiet, sequestered walks of life. There is a more suitable adaptation in the modes of thinking, habits of life, and style of expression in this class of persons to the great masses of society, than in any other. There is a sympathy and a fellowship of feeling and sentiment peculiarly favorable to

usefulness. Eternity alone can reveal the extent of the good accomplished by the lives, actual and written, of such men of God.

We maintain that not only the lives of ministers of the class to which we now refer, but the lives also of many of the lay members of our churches, should be written and preserved for the benefit of the church. The Bible sanctions it. It contains a record, brief, to be sure, of the extraordinary piety of those who occupied the humble walks of life. These are preserved as models for our imitation. They, being dead, yet speak. No more valuable contribution can be made to our Sabbath School and religious circulating libraries than the religious biographies of active, useful, and deeply pious members of the church. No one can even conjecture what amount of good would result from the written every-day walk and conversation of too many who are permitted to pass away without any lasting memorial of their exalted worth. The life of a single faithful class-leader might, at this time, produce the happiest results among the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It is hoped that the thoughts to which we have given utterance may draw the attention of the church more fully to this subject.

We have taken in hand to lay before the reader the life of one of the holiest and purest men that it has ever been our good fortune to know. We will not say that he was without an infirmity or imperfection. What mortal ever was? But his whole life was, perhaps, as free from those blemishes which ordinarily mar the symmetry and beauty of the characters of the best of men, as any man's who has lived in modern times -- nay, perhaps, in any age of the world. This is saying a great deal. It may, indeed, startle the reader who has heard but little or nothing of the man whose life we are about to write. But hold, till his life and the end of his life are before you, and then say whether we have made an exaggerated or unwarranted statement. In the examination of his life and character, we shall be especially struck with the singular consistency of his conduct with his acknowledged principles of action; and with, the extreme and scrupulous conscientiousness of the man, in every act of his life, both great and small. We shall see that the Bible was his rule of conduct in every thing; and that he was always willing sooner to give up the dearest objects of his affections, or to suffer any privation of life, than to consent, for a moment, to anything, however trivial it might appear to others, which his own conscience disapproved or he believed the word of God condemned.

It was a privilege of no ordinary value to enjoy his acquaintance and society; for no one could long be in his company without feeling the influence of his piety. His manner, conversation, and spirit were eminently adapted to impress the mind of every one with the conviction that he had been with Jesus.

Rev. John Wesley Childs was an extraordinary man; -- not in mental endowments; not in the highest gifts of eloquence and oratory; not in varied and erudite scholarship; nor was he what is commonly called a genius; -- and yet he was a most remarkable man. Remarkable for his deep and influential piety; for his habitual communion with God; for his profound humility; for his self-denial and devotion to his Master's work; and especially for his consistency and conscientiousness. We repeat, that he was the most scrupulously conscientious man we have ever known; and we very much doubt whether any one ever obeyed the behests of the inward monitor with more uniformity than did this singularly good man. In all things he labored "to keep a

conscience void of offense toward God and man." And in the development of his history, we shall find a number of incidents and facts illustrative of this trait of his character.

Some, we doubt not, will be disposed to think that he carried his conscientious scruples too far -- that he was tender and careful in relation to some things which should not have been dignified with the importance which he attached to them. But it will be seen that he could not have been happy had he not obeyed the dictates of his own conscience.

There were some things in relation to which he differed from his brethren in the ministry; and yet he always entertained the kindest feelings toward those with whom he differed. He was firm in the maintenance of his opinions, but never lost sight of the respect that was due to an adversary.

He was, for the most part, a silent member of the conference; and yet he was always in his place, and never inattentive to the business, even in the detail of the proceedings. There he sat, solemn and serious, with his memorandum in his hand, carefully noting down everything of interest; but scarcely ever spoke a word on any question of debate.

Mr. Childs left a good impression wherever he went. In every family which he visited he left behind him an influence that told happily upon the lives of the inmates. There was something in his meek and affectionate manner, and even in the tone of his voice, that never failed to impress everyone who was thrown in contact with him. His presence often excited a kind of awe and reverence in the minds of all who knew any thing of his manner of life.

There have been but few men, in any age of the church, who have regularly spent as much time in private devotion as did Mr. Childs. We have no means of ascertaining certainly how many hours of each day he ordinarily spent in secret prayer, accompanied with the reading of the Scriptures; but we have often been with him when we have noticed something like the following order in his devotions for several days in succession, and we have been informed by those who knew him best, that it was the uniform course and habit of his life. We have known him to rise at four o'clock in the morning, partially make his toilet, [toilet n. the process of washing oneself, dressing, etc. (make one's toilet). -- Oxford Dict.] and then take his Bible and kneel at a chair near a table or stand on which his light was placed, and there continue in earnest secret prayer for a considerable length of time, becoming occasionally very much engaged and excited.

Then he would open his Bible and read, taking the Scriptures in regular order, every few moments audibly asking God for light upon the Divine word. Sometimes he would take Mr. Wesley's notes, a copy of which he always had at hand, and consult them upon the portions of Scripture before him. And thus he would continue until he had gone through his allotment of chapters for the morning. Then he would again engage in silent, secret prayer, spending altogether from one to two hours in this exercise. He would then arise from his knees, finish his toilet; after which he usually made his entry in his private diary, generally writing from six to ten or a dozen lines. He would then return to his private devotions for a short time; after which he arose from his knees and commenced his regular course of study or reading for the day, which he pursued till he was called to family prayers.

He ordinarily remained with the family then till breakfast, conversing on some profitable subject: after breakfast he immediately retired to his room, where he spent a while in private prayer, rarely ever less than fifteen or twenty minutes, and very often at least half an hour. Then again he went to his books, or to his writing, which he pursued, with occasional intermissions for prayer, till time to go to his appointment; not, however, without first praying with the family in which he was staying. On his way to church, when his time would allow it, he would frequently stop at houses upon the road, step in, speak to the family on the subject of religion, and propose "a word of prayer." Kneeling down, he would sometimes pray with great fervor and power, and often leave the grateful and astonished family bathed in tears, pronouncing blessings upon the kind stranger, who seemed to have so much of the Spirit of that Divine Being who "went about doing good."

On his arrival at the church, if in a forest, he usually retired to some secluded and quiet spot, beneath the over-arching trees, where he spent a short time in prayer before going into the place of public worship. He then conducted the services, scarcely ever failing to give an invitation to seekers of religion to designate themselves as such; and if any were present, he always spent some time with them in singing and prayer, and often rejoiced over their conversion before he left. At the close of the services he would go home with the person who seemed to need him most; and when dinner was over, he usually proposed to unite with the family in prayer around the table; and there he poured out his soul in thanksgivings for the mercies received, and in earnest supplications for the favor of God to the family; and very often, on such occasions, he would pray for each member of the family by name, asking for them such blessings as their various ages, circumstances, and relations in life seemed to indicate they needed most.

He would then retire to his room and spend from fifteen minutes to half an hour in private prayer, accompanied with the reading of a few passages of the Scriptures. And then again, about the time of the evening twilight, in the holy calm and hush of that serene and silent hour, he always spent some time in secret calling upon God. This seemed to be the period in which he most enjoyed his devotions. Sometimes his full soul would overrun with holy joy, which he could not suppress; and heaven itself, at such times, "seemed let down with a strange, bewildering splendor" around him, in these sweet and hallowed moments of communion with God.

Directly after supper and family worship, he usually retired to his room, where he spent his time till nine o'clock -- which was his hour for sleep -- upon his knees, in prayer and reading the Scriptures. This was his uniform course of life. When he spent a whole day in the same family, he generally, in addition to the morning and evening family worship, called together the members of the family about the house, and conducted prayer about the middle of the day. It is fairly to be presumed that he spent at least from three to four hours of each day upon his knees in private devotion, in addition to the public prayers which he held in the church and in families.

He fasted every Tuesday and Friday of each week; and very often abstained from animal food for several months together. He rarely ever indulged in dessert; always wore cheap and plain clothing, and was scrupulously careful that his family should not indulge in the fashions or amusements of the world. He was crucified to the world. He was dead to the world. Nothing that he conceived to be wrong was ever suffered to pass in his presence without a suitable reproof.

This he always took care to administer in the mildest and kindest manner; but still with such a spirit as fastened it upon the conscience.

Gaiety of apparel, and especially decorations of the person, he never spared. He talked many a ring from the fingers of worldly-minded professors of religion, and stripped many a bonnet of its artificial flowers. He has even been known to refuse to distribute the elements to communicants at the Lord's table until they would remove the rings from their fingers. And yet the subjects of his reproofs were but seldom, if ever, offended with him. His own life was so consistent, while his manner of reproof was so affectionate, and so full of the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, that no one could easily resist his appeals under reproof. He often made persons fall out with themselves -- rarely ever with him.

In person, Mr. Childs was a good-looking man. He was full six feet in height, large frame, and well proportioned; rather light complexion; black eyes, and dark hair. His abstemious habits and delicate health gave him, for the most part, a pale and rather cadaverous face. There was, indeed, a singular and remarkable expression of countenance. It was that expression with which pure thoughts, deep spiritual meditation, and holy communion with God invest "the human face divine." It was something rather unearthly. Everyone was struck with the sanctity and heavenly-mindedness of that face. He stood erect; and in the pulpit he was always solemn -- deeply solemn. His appearance in that sacred place never failed to impress a congregation. His voice was slender, and yet strong. In pathetic appeal the tones were peculiarly touching.

His gait was serious, and yet not slow or sluggish. Whatever he did, he performed with his might. He was always employed; never triflingly employed. He observed method in everything. He possessed pleasant social qualities; but scarcely ever spent more than an hour at a time in company. He indulged sparingly in anecdote; and, although he frequently smiled, he rarely ever laughed. His apparel was always very plain, but exceedingly neat. With him, "cleanliness was next, to godliness." He was even in his temper, and was never excited on any subject except the subject of religion.

We have thus introduced to the reader in advance, and of design, a general view of the life and character of the man whose biography we are about more fully and in detail to submit to the public. Some may have taken up the impression, from what we have stated, that he was slightly tinged with asceticism; others that he was "righteous over much;" while others may be ready to regard him as an enthusiast. Let us calmly examine his life in the light of his own motives and intentions, and suspend judgment in the premises until we shall have seen the close. One who knew him best, the pious and devoted partner of sixteen years of his life, thus speaks of him:--

"I can say, after sixteen years' acquaintance with him, he came nearer being a perfect man than anyone I ever saw. Since his departure, I have reviewed his life in every relation, and compared it with the requirements of God's word, and, so far as I can see, it comes up to those requirements in every respect." In another letter she writes as follows: "After our marriage, he frequently told me that if he ever seemed to neglect me, not to attribute it to any want of affection; for," says she, "when engaged in his work, everything else was lost to his mind; so great was his desire to be found of God as a faithful workman. I have often been with him at his meetings," she continues, "when his arrangements would be made to leave as soon as the services were over, for

the neighborhood of his next appointment. But he would seem to forget all, and labor on until four or five o'clock in the afternoon, without respite or refreshment. He seemed to forget that he was mortal. I have sometimes ventured to tell him he ought to take some rest. His reply invariably was, 'Not till I rest in the grave.' During the last two years of his life, I have often thought he seemed to be trying to see how much he could crowd into each hour. He preached more, fasted more, and visited more. As to reading and prayer, when at home, there was no room for amendment; for his life was prayer. He was never moved in spirit by any of the incidents connected with domestic affairs. If at any time anything disagreeable occurred, he instantly resorted to prayer. There was ever that same meek and quiet spirit at home as abroad. A kinder husband or father never lived."

Such is the testimony of one who was intimately acquainted with his private walks, and who knew more of his habitual spirit and temper than any other person living.

From the foregoing glances at his life, the reader will be prepared for the further and more minute details of his history, developing more fully his extraordinary devotion to the cause of Christ; his unceasing and superabundant labors; his unabating zeal for the salvation of souls; his rigid self-denial; his deadness to the world; his singular confidence in the providence of God, and his uniform consistency till the end of his days. The Lord, of his mercy, grant that the perusal of the following pages may be made a blessing to the reader.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Chapter 2 HIS EARLY BOYHOOD

His birth -- Parentage -- Early education -- Habits and temper -- Goes To Georgetown to live -- Letter from Rev. William McKenney, giving an account of him while an inmate of his family -- His return home

John Wesley Childs was born in Calvert county, Maryland, in the year of our Lord 1800. He was the third son of the Rev. John, and Margaret Childs, both of whom were deeply pious and active members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His father was a traveling minister in connection with the Baltimore Conference at the time of his marriage; but within a year or two thereafter he located, and turned his attention to farming, which he pursued until 1816, when he was re-admitted into the conference and continued to travel until his death, which occurred in 1829. He was a man of sterling piety, and of useful gifts as a minister of our holy religion.

Mrs. Childs' maiden name was Adams. She was of an old and influential Methodist family of Fairfax county, Virginia. Her father, the Rev. Wesley Adams, was one of the first Methodists in that part of the country, and was, for many years, a local minister of high respectability and extensive usefulness. Two or three of his sons sustained the same relation to the church; one of whom, though far advanced in years, is still laboring as a minister in one of the southern states. Mrs. Childs was a woman of fine sense, and was remarkable for her self-sacrificing spirit and deep devotion to the cause of God. As a mother, she understood her duty and responsibility; and most constantly and untiringly did she labor to discharge the whole measure of obligation

devolving upon her in this relation of life. Never was a child blessed with better parents than was the subject of this biographical sketch.

In the year 1802, while John Wesley [Childs] was but an infant, his father moved to Fairfax county, in the State of Virginia, where he continued to carry on his farming operations, still exercising his ministerial function as circumstances seemed to demand. His children were brought up on the farm, in habits of industry and economy. But amid the temporal cares which necessarily occupied the parent's mind, the spiritual welfare of his children was never forgotten. He did not permit himself to be so engrossed with the questions "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" as to disregard the higher claims which his family had upon him for spiritual provision. Morning and evening the whole household were summoned around the family altar, and a portion of time was consecrated to religious services. The reading of the Holy Scriptures, singing the praise of God, and prayer, formed the devotional exercises in family worship. In the absence of the father, the mother or some other member of the family conducted the services. Whatever else was neglected, domestic worship was not; nor was it passed over hastily and carelessly, but with becoming solemnity as in the presence of God, and with direct reference to his glory and the salvation of the family.

In the year 1810, Mrs. Childs died, and left the entire parental oversight of the children to the father. Most of the children, however, were at that time grown up to maturity; so that the burden was comparatively light. And so well instructed were the daughters in household duties, that they were prepared at once to take the management of the younger children and of domestic affairs in their own hands.

At an early age, John Wesley commenced his elementary education under the tuition of his uncle, the Rev. Wesley Adams, at that time a local minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Under the instruction of this holy and amiable man, the moral feelings of the lad were properly developed as well as his intellect. The exercises of the school were opened and closed with prayer. The Bible was the principal textbook. God was acknowledged in all things. And, as might naturally be expected, the influence of this teacher was great with his pupils. Especially was it so with the meek and gentle little Wesley. He saw everything in his pious uncle to admire and imitate. His mind was susceptible of impressions from such an example; and till the day of his death he had occasion to thank God for so judicious, godly, and exemplary a guide and instructor of his youth. We entertain no doubt that the extraordinary cast of his life took complexion from those more than ordinarily pious persons with whom he was surrounded in his boyhood; and perhaps no one did more, by the quiet but irresistible force of example, to give proper direction to the current of thought and feeling which ran through his whole history, than did the man who had charge of his early training in letters.

At the early age of twelve or thirteen years, his father sent him to live with the Rev. William McKenney, at that time an extensive merchant in Georgetown, in the District of Columbia.

Up to this period of his life, the only thing worthy of note is the habitual seriousness and gravity that characterized his deportment. He indulged but sparingly, if at all, in the ordinary amusements and sports of boys of his age. He seemed to prefer the society of persons beyond his years, and always manifested a singular interest in religious subjects. He has often been heard to

say that he never disobeyed his parents in anything, great or small, and that he never knowingly uttered a falsehood. Strange to say, he was exceedingly fond of his Bible at this tender age, a copy of which he always kept at hand. His brothers, who were of a less sedate turn of mind than himself, jeeringly called him a preacher, while he was but a boy; but this neither irritated him nor caused him to change his course of conduct. He prayed as regularly as any Christian, and was as attentive to the preaching of the word and other religious duties as if he had been a member of the church.

The Rev. William McKenney is still alive, and is at present a chaplain in the United States Navy. In answer to a letter addressed to him, asking for a written statement of his recollections of the spirit, temper, habits, &c. &c. of John Wesley [Childs], while he lived in his family, we have the following, which cannot fail to interest the reader

Norfolk, Virginia

Dear Brother:-- Your letter requesting me to furnish you with such incidents in the life of the late John Wesley Childs as I might be able to remember, while he was an inmate of my family in his boyhood, has been received. But so many years have elapsed since he was temporarily under my care, and so many changes, storms, and tempests, on the land and on the deep blue sea, have overtaken me since that time, that I am almost sure my reminiscences of him will be imperfect and very few. However, such as I can recollect, by brushing up my memory, are at your service.

Brother Childs came from a good stock -- a family well known and highly appreciated for their deep-toned, experimental, and practical piety. The father was a faithful minister of the gospel in connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church; and, although his talents were not adorned with the tinsel of modern rhetorical flourish, they were exactly of that order which suited the people and the times, and enabled him to portray, in the simplicity of gospel sincerity, the leading cardinal doctrines of our holy religion -- repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost, and a life of practical piety. The mother, so far as I can recollect, was all that such a husband could ask -- deeply pious, unassuming, faithful in all her duties -- strong in her attachments, and truly devoted to the best interests of her husband and children.

Indeed, father and mother, husband and wife, seem to have caught and retained the spirit of their near neighbor and still nearer relation, the Rev. William Watters -- a man, a Christian, and a minister of unsurpassed excellence. This holy man was among the first native American Methodists; and was, no doubt, of incalculable service to the truly apostolic Bishop Asbury in his sublime efforts to train up a people and a church in these, then called, western wilds, upon the platform and model of the primitive apostolic churches. How well he succeeded we all know; and, although it may seem a little out of the way, I will state, for the sake of its truth, so far as it goes, that a leading, prominent, and distinguished minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the city of New York, said to me, in his own house, probably eighteen years ago, "Your church, sir, is certainly, in regard to your manner of employing your ministers, sending them out in pairs, or two and two, more apostolic than any other church." Might he not have admitted, with equal truth, that the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church are equally as apostolic as her manner of employing ministers? All this, however, by the way.



Often has it been my privilege to hear Father Watters, even after age had so obscured his vision that he could not distinguish in his congregation the features of his most beloved and intimate friends, pouring forth, in strains of deep, impassioned, and scriptural eloquence, the fullness of his soul, while explaining, enforcing, and glorying in the precious doctrines of the cross -- salvation by faith, holiness of heart, and integrity of life. Unlike too many ministers of modern date, who too often aim at great things and make great displays of oratorical flourish; who elevate the cross of Christ to make themselves the more conspicuous; and who, as a necessary consequence, utterly fail, and leave their hearers as barren of spiritual comfort as the withered fig-tree was of fruit -- he never failed. He always hit the nail on the head, and drove it home. He always fed his flock with the richest gospel food. The babe in Christ the young men and fathers, had each his suitable portion in due season. He was always ready, and always good; so that it was commonly said of him, "He is real bacon and cabbage," a dish well known, and not lightly esteemed, in the South, and one always in season and at hand.

Can it, then, be a matter of surprise or wonder that one so favored as was our lamented brother Childs, with such parents as his were, and such a patriarchal leader and guide of the whole neighborhood and family circle as Father Watters, should have been a youth of more than ordinary sedateness, humility, and fidelity? He was well trained, and that training received the impress of permanent attachment to all the beauties of truthfulness, simplicity of manners, obedience to parents, and reverence for age, from the preaching and example of his venerable uncle, Father Watters.\*

[\*In the preceding, the writer apparently says that William Watters was the uncle of John Wesley Childs. This is also reflected from the following portion of a previous paragraph: "Indeed, father and mother, husband and wife, seem to have caught and retained the spirit of their near neighbor and still nearer relation, the Rev. William Watters -- a man, a Christian, and a minister of unsurpassed excellence. This holy man was among the first native American Methodists." William Watters was the first American-born Methodist Circuit Rider. See William Watters, 1st Circuit Rider -- hdm0215.tex, and The Autobiography of William Watters -- hdm0778.tex.-- DVM]

When young Wesley Childs became an inmate of my family, I resided in Georgetown, District of Columbia, and was largely engaged in mercantile operations. My high respect for his parents and deep veneration for his uncle, although I did not need his services, induced me to take him into my counting-room. How long he remained with me I cannot now remember; though I never shall forget, that, during the whole time he was with me, his conduct was without reproach. He was always cheerful, obedient, and faithful; and was, without doubt, one of the most scrupulously conscientious youths I ever saw. I never had cause, as well as I now remember, to give him one single rebuke. He was treated by myself and family as one of our own children, and most tenderly and affectionately did he return our love. During the time he stayed with me, I was rearing one of my younger brothers. Wesley and he were like David and Jonathan. My brother was lively and cheerful; and, like others of his age and temperament, was quite fond of what boys still call fun. There was nothing, however, in his sportive sallies approximating vice. He loved a good joke, and so did Wesley, who, with all his natural demureness, would now and then venture to crack one; and whenever he did so, it was well done.

In the family circle, as I have already intimated, Wesley was all that could be expected or desired for one of his age. He was a regular attendant on the public ministry of the word, and was equally prompt in his attendance on domestic worship around my family altar. He indulged in no pleasure-trips on the Sabbath, except, to him, as it will always be to all loving and dutiful children, the very great pleasure of an occasional visit to his parents, distant about seven miles from Georgetown.

At the time the city of Washington and the District of Columbia were attacked by the British army and navy in 1814, under the command of General Ross and Admiral Cockburn, I was engaged, as an officer of the district militia, in aiding to make the necessary preparations to resist the threatened attack upon our national capital and the firesides of our families, and was necessarily much absent from my family and business. My store was left in the hands of my brother and young Wesley; and faithfully did they watch my property and interests until the disastrous results of the final encounter with the enemy, which left the city and Georgetown at their mercy. They then, sharing in the general panic of the citizens, fled, as they supposed for their lives, into Fairfax county, taking with them, among other moneys, a ten-dollar bank-note, which I had laid aside as counterfeit. This, with other moneys in their possession, they spent in settling up any business in their hands. I mention this for a special reason, which you will presently see.

When the militia of the District were mustered out of the United States' service, I found my business so deranged and broken up, that I at once determined to close my store; consequently I had no need of any other assistance than I could command in my own family. Hence, my young friend [John Wesley Childs] was not called back. He, however, often visited me, and was always received with every mark of kindness and affection. The impressions made upon my mind by his amiable and upright conduct while he was with me have never been effaced, and never will. I loved him as a lad; I have loved him ever since, till the day of his death, as a man, a Christian, and a Christian minister.

Having removed from the District of Columbia in 1824, I had lost sight of Wesley. Several years thereafter, I was most agreeably and unexpectedly surprised in meeting my former young friend in this city, a full-grown man, and a faithful minister of the Gospel. Whether at this interview or a subsequent one, I do not now remember, I found the mind of Brother Childs somewhat troubled, and he was not long in letting me know the cause. It seems that he had often been troubled about the supposed counterfeit ten-dollar bank-note which he and my brother had spent at the time and under the circumstances referred to above. He had often thought of it, and had ever felt the greatest anxiety to repair the damage to the injured person to whom it was passed. "Tell me what I shall do?" said he. "What shall you do?" said I; "why, if you can find the injured person to whom it was passed, or any of his 'kith or kin,' who has suffered thereby; or, that being, in all human probability impossible, if you can find any person who received the note for its supposed full value, it might, in that case, be your duty to replace it by a genuine note. But as I think this about as impossible as it would be for you to find a needle lost thirty years ago in one of your father's wheat-stacks, I advise you to banish the subject from your mind, and rest content with a consciousness of your integrity in the sight of God." This will serve to show the extreme sensitiveness of his conscience, even from his youth. You may feel at liberty to make any use of these recollections, very imperfectly thrown together, that you may deem proper.

With high esteem,  
I am truly yours, in Christian bonds,  
W. McKenney

The above impresses us favorably with the early boyhood of the subject of this biography. His habitual mildness, his docile spirit, his affectionate disposition, and his extreme conscientiousness are all apparent. And as the germ contains the future plant in embryo -- or, as the undeveloped bud contains the miniature flower which is to expand and bloom in fragrance and beauty -- so do we see the man in the boy:--

"The child is father of the man."

He remained at his father's several months after leaving Georgetown. He was young, and the unsettled state of the country seemed to shut him up to the farm. But the delicacy of his physical constitution, which seemed to disqualify him for agricultural pursuits, led his father to look out for him some other situation in life. What he should do was difficult to determine. The foot of the invader was still on our shores; the blast of the war-trumpet was still echoing in the land; the roar of artillery was still heard upon the field and booming over the waters; but as hostilities began to cease, and the pulse of commerce began again to throb, there was an opening for young Wesley to enter a business-house in the city of Richmond, Virginia. The father did not long hesitate in placing him in this situation. His residence in Richmond, with its attendant incidents, will form the subject of the next chapter.

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### Chapter 3 HIS RESIDENCE IN RICHMOND

Goes To Richmond -- Lives with William Allison -- His habits -- Associates -- Awakening -- Conversion -- Joins the church -- Extract of a letter from Mrs. Childs -- Spiritual conflicts -- Well-nigh becomes discouraged -- Reconsecrates himself to God -- Mrs. Allison's account of him -- Painfully exercised on the subject of preaching -- Leaves Richmond

Near the close of the last war [The War of 1812] with Great Britain, in the year 1814, the late William Allison, commenced business in Richmond as a China merchant. Previous to his removal to Richmond, he was engaged in mercantile pursuits in the town of Alexandria, in the District of Columbia; and during his residence in this latter-named place, Rev. Childs, father of Wesley, had made his acquaintance. He knew him to be a man of active, industrious business habits, a man of unshaken integrity, and a man of solid and genuine piety. He therefore did not hesitate a moment, when the opportunity offered, to place his son under his care, and in his employment. Mr. Allison had a partner in business who was an irreligious and worldly-minded man; but it was understood that young Wesley was to be especially under the charge of Allison; that he was to board with him, and associate with him as a companion. All this was settled in advance.

In the latter part of the year 1814, young Wesley made his preparations to leave the parental roof again, to enter upon a new sphere of action. It was not without a struggle that he tore himself away from his mother's grave and from all the fond and cherished endearments of home. He was next to the youngest of the sons; and from his kind and affectionate disposition, his amiable and docile spirit, he had become the pet of the family. His sisters were devoted to him, and almost idolized him; his father loved him, and his brothers and young companions were tenderly attached to him. It was, therefore, a painful thing for them to give him up, and it was no less painful for him to leave the home of his youth and the scenes of his childhood. But his father was then making arrangements to enter again the traveling ministry; his brothers and sisters were beginning to scatter and settle in life; the family connections were breaking up; and it was necessary for him to begin to prepare more fully for the active and responsible duties that awaited him. He repaired to Richmond, according to previous arrangements, and entered immediately upon business, as a salesman in Mr. Allison's store.

In Mr. Allison he found a kind and judicious friend and counselor. He made every allowance for his inexperience; fully appreciated his strict conscientiousness, and did all that lay in his power to advance his spiritual as well as his temporal welfare.

Mr. Allison was, at that time, an unmarried man, and he therefore made John Wesley his associate and companion. They ate together, slept together, walked and conversed together, and were almost inseparable. Mr. Allison was a man of uniform and consistent piety, and, as might be anticipated, he was constantly making a deep religious impression upon the mind and heart of his youthful friend. The gentleman who was in business with Mr. Allison, being an irreligious man, and somewhat averse to religion, was not at all-prepared to appreciate the conscientious scruples of young Childs. He regarded his extreme tenacity for truth and his exact honesty in selling goods as mere affectation and an over-scrupulous morality. The whole was but foolish fastidiousness in his estimation. The consequence was, he became an eyesore to this member of the firm. This, however, did not affect the conduct of Mr. Allison toward the youth; nor did it in the least change the habitually strict deportment of the young man himself. It was a matter of settled principle with him, even before his conversion, "to deal justly" with men, and at all hazards to preserve a good conscience in the sight of God. He would a thousand times sooner have sacrificed his situation than have surrendered this point.

He was always attentive to business. Rising at an early hour, wasting no time in frivolous amusements, devoting his attention untiringly to the interests of his employers, he won the confidence and esteem of Mr. Allison, and commanded the reluctant respect of his partner in trade. He was cautious in selecting his associates. Living as he did in a city where he was constantly surrounded with idlers ever ready to lead the unwary from the paths of virtue, he studiously avoided their company. He remembered the early lessons of a sainted mother, the parting advice of his father, and carefully restrained his feet from the destructive haunts of vice. Fortunately for him, there were then living in Richmond two young men who were equally circumspect in their deportment and careful as to their society as himself. They still live. Both of them are extensive merchants -- one in Petersburg, and the other in Richmond, Virginia -- men who are worthy of any age, of any country, and of any church -- men who, in the "sere and yellow leaf" of life, are still reaping the fruits of their early habits, in the elevated positions which they occupy in the church of God, and in the communities in which they respectively live. We allude to D'Arcy Paul and

Samuel Putney. The subject of our biography was fortunate enough to have these young men for his associates and companions in his youth, and precisely at that period of life and under those circumstances when he most stood in need of such associates. And these men now bear the highest testimony to the probity and integrity of John Wesley Childs at this part of his history.

We have no means of ascertaining at what period of his life he first became concerned upon the subject of his soul's salvation. It is, however, fairly to be presumed that he scarcely knew himself. He was, from his earliest recollections, convinced of the truth of religion, and also of its necessity to make one happy in this life and in the life to come. He had seen its effects upon the lives of many of his nearest and dearest friends and relatives. He had witnessed its power, when but a child, in the triumphs of his mother's closing-scene on earth. There was no particular time to which he could revert, at which he received his convictions of the indispensable necessity of religion. He was no skeptic. He believed the Bible, and was well instructed in it from his childhood. Every sermon he heard upon the subject of conversion deepened the impressions upon his mind, and he was constantly, in his own way, seeking to be a Christian.

Pride, he has often been heard to say, was his besetting sin. He was fond of dress, and was exceedingly particular as to his personal appearance. And yet, such was his habitual demeanor, and such the apparent meekness of his disposition, that scarcely any one would have suspected him of being proud. Mr. Putney and Mr. Paul, however, who were most intimate with him at the time of which we now write, partially, at least, confirm his own statements in relation to this point.

We have learned from them, verbally, that he was very particular in regard to his clothing; and that the attention which he paid to his wardrobe and toilet fully justified the opinion that he indulged a slight degree of inordinate self-esteem. This, however, was not characterized by ostentation or hauteur. [hauteur = haughtiness of manner -- Oxford Dict.] He was conscious, nevertheless, of its existence, and it seems to have formed the greatest impediment to his conversion. He could not gain the consent of his mind publicly to confess Christ. Under his awakenings, he often wept and prayed in secret places before the mercy-seat. He struggled hard against the unsubdued pride of his sinful heart. He earnestly besought God to forgive his sins, and to

"Assure his conscience of a part  
In the Redeemer's blood."

He regularly waited on the ministry of the word. No one was more punctual in his attendance upon the weekly prayer-meetings of the church than he. The Bible and religious books were his constant companions; and yet he lingered at the door of mercy without tasting "the joys of pardoned sin." And all, as he subsequently avowed, because of the pride of his nature, which would not yield to an open confession of his concern upon the subject. He was ashamed of Jesus -- ashamed publicly to confess him -- ashamed to bear his reproach, and identify himself with his followers.

At this point he halted for some time. No one was aware of the deep and abiding anxiety which he felt about the salvation of his soul. He was reluctant to open his mind even to Mr. Allison, whom he had ever found a kind and sympathetic friend and adviser. His interest at length

became so intense that he determined no longer to conceal it; and having obtained the consent of his employers, he attended a camp-meeting, held in the summer of 1816, in the Lancaster circuit, in the Northern Neck of Virginia, then in the bounds of the Baltimore Annual Conference. He went to this meeting for the purpose of seeking religion. His mind was fully made up publicly to confess himself a guilty sinner in the sight of God -- to humble his heart in the dust; to ask an interest in the prayers of Christians, and to seek till he should find. It so happened, that his father, the Rev. John Childs, at that time a traveling preacher in the Baltimore Conference, had charge of the Westmoreland circuit that year. It is not improbable that this fact had its influence upon his mind in determining him to attend the meeting. An opportunity would be presented to see his father, to enjoy his society, and especially to receive his counsel and the benefit of his prayers at this peculiarly interesting stage of his religious exercises of mind. He had unbounded confidence in his father's piety; and he knew that no one living felt a deeper concern for his salvation than he. Being a stranger on the camp-ground, he had no ungodly associates to draw off his mind from the subject, and but little to divert his attention from the great work in which he was engaged.

The full and unreserved consent of his mind having been gained publicly to seek Christ, and never to rest until he was found, he had but little to do. He was in that state in which he could say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." He was ready to exclaim, "Lord, I do believe, help thou mine unbelief." At a suitable time, when an invitation was given to penitents to come forward publicly and receive the prayers and instructions of the people of God, he deliberately arose and went forward to the place appropriated to seekers of religion; and in a very short time arose, professing to have obtained the blessing for which he had so long prayed.

His conversion was not attended with great excitement; but was peaceful and tranquil. The tears of grateful joy danced upon his cheeks. A radiant smile lighted up his meek and delicate face. His heart swelled with joyful emotions which his tongue could not express. The burden of guilt had been removed from his heart. The evidence of his conversion was full and complete. Nature around him seemed to have put on a garb of unwonted loveliness. The forests and the skies, the sunshine and the flowers, the faces of those who rejoiced over his conversion, and all the objects on every hand, seemed to glow with an expression of praise to the great and good Creator of all. Love to God and love to man arose spontaneously in his bosom; and, feeling an indisputable evidence in his own heart of his personal acceptance with his Maker, he was enabled with an unwavering tongue to say --

"My God is reconciled,  
His pardoning voice I hear;  
He owns me for his child,  
I can no longer fear:  
With confidence I now draw nigh,  
And Father, Abba, Father, cry."

The name of Jesus had a peculiar charm. The songs of Zion, as they arose in the tented grove and died away upon the hills, had never sounded so sweetly before. He was born again -- born of the Spirit -- he had passed from death unto life; old things had passed away and all things had become new. So clear and satisfactory was the evidence of his conversion to his own mind,

that he never doubted, at any period of his after life, the genuineness and thoroughness of the change that he then and there experienced.

He returned to Richmond from the camp-meeting, and immediately united himself with the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was afraid to risk himself without the pale of the church of Christ. The church he regarded as a divine institution, and, as a disciple of Jesus, he did not feel himself at liberty to decline a union with it. He felt the need of its discipline and ordinances, of its associations and its prayers, and he deferred not to avail himself of the privilege of church fellowship. He was young, being but seventeen years of age, and he felt the need of counsel and religious instruction and advice from the more experienced members of the body of Christ. At his own request, he was placed in the class in which his employer, Mr. Allison, met. This was a good indication. It showed that he was not disposed to shrink from the closest scrutiny as to his religious character. It showed, also, his confidence in the piety of his employer. They met together in class, prayed together in their room, read the Scriptures together, and hand in hand trod the path that leads to the mansions of the blest.

But our young convert was, at an early stage of his Christian experience, the subject of painful and distressing temptations; and in the midst of them he encountered very great discouragements. The following extract from a letter written by his widow, relating to this period of his life, will throw some light upon the subject, and will interest the reader:--

"During his residence in Richmond, he became concerned about saving his soul. He had always been very moral -- never swore an oath or told an untruth. He left Richmond to attend a camp-meeting, with his mind fully made up to seek God in the forgiveness of his sins. He did seek, and successfully. He returned to the city, resolved to devote his all to his God. But his hitherto besetting sin was pride, which now again stood in his way. Satan greatly harassed him from time to time with the most awful suggestions, which seemed to threaten his eternal destruction. Often did he wrestle for hours, prostrate on the floor, pleading for deliverance. In his anguish of soul, he ventured to unfold his mind to an old member of the church, who not only did not teach him to expect deliverance from all sin, but rather made light of his exercises. Such was the effect upon his mind, that for a while he was greatly tempted to give up his confidence and abandon his pursuit."

He has frequently been heard to speak of his exercises of mind during the period to which the extract above relates. The author has heard him say that the pride of his heart came well-nigh ruining him at this time.

His fondness for dress was exceedingly hard to overcome. His mind was too much occupied with the fashions and customs of the world. He determined, through the aid of Divine grace, to gain the mastery, and to become a holy Christian. He took the word of God for his guide, and set his standard high. The devil seemed determined to defeat him. The conflict was fierce and strong. At times he felt as though he was rapidly gaining the victory -- that he was putting the world beneath his feet, and that he was casting Satan behind him. The injudicious advice of the old Christian gave the enemy the advantage for a while. He scarcely knew what course to pursue. His soul was cast down within him -- his sky was overcast with clouds -- his feet seemed stumbling again upon the dark mountains. In his despondency he was ready to say --

"There is a heaven o'er yonder sky;  
A heaven where pleasures never die;  
A heaven I sometimes hope to see,  
But fear again 'tis not for me."

In this state of mind he continued for several months. He attended church regularly -- never missed his class-meeting, and was always present at the weekly prayer-meeting. His conduct, however, in the church frequently attracted the attention of his acquaintances and friends. It was observed at the prayer-meeting that he uniformly sat in the remotest corner of the room, and, if possible, got a position where he could not be seen by the person conducting the services. The design on his part -- for there was manifestly design -- was not then understood. He was regarded by all who knew him as deeply pious and exemplary, and it was a matter of surprise that he should not seem to manifest a more lively interest in the public exercises of the church. In the class-room he spoke but little, and often despondingly. There seemed, indeed, a mystery about his spiritual condition and exercises.

In 1819, Mr. Allison was married, and very soon thereafter commenced housekeeping in Richmond. Mr. Childs, then nearly a grown young man, was taken as an inmate of their little family; and Mrs. Allison, an intelligent and pious lady, was daily cognizant of his private walk and conversation. In a letter received from her in reply to one of inquiry, asking for her impressions of his religious character at the time he lived in her family, she thus writes:--

"I always considered Brother Childs deeply pious. He was remarkably modest and unpretending -- said nothing and did nothing for appearances. One trait I considered remarkable -- he always preferred meeting in class with his employer, with whom he lived and slept until within a year or two of his leaving Richmond. I believe the latter had his entire confidence. He was always very conscientious. After I came to Richmond, I always noticed, whenever there was any excitement in the church, that he seemed to take no part in it; indeed, it seemed to render him uncomfortable. He never went forward to take a part in the exercises, but always took an obscure seat and kept silence. I wondered at this, feeling, as I did, assured of his genuine piety. He was always ready for any and every other good work. But the mystery was unraveled in after years to my entire satisfaction by himself. He said he was so much afraid of being called to the ministry that he carefully avoided everything that might lead to it. And from his unhappy appearance on such occasions, I doubt not he was deeply exercised on that subject at that time; feeling that he was out of his place, and consequently restless and unsettled."

Mr. Childs' associates plainly saw that something was preying on his mind that revealed itself in his face; but what it was they knew not, and he studiously avoided making any revelations on the subject. The fact was, God had laid the coal of prophecy upon his heart, and he felt that a dispensation of the gospel was committed unto him. But he labored under such a painful conviction of a want of qualification for the great and awfully responsible vocation, that he attempted to smother the fire in his own bosom; and his language was that of Jeremiah when the word of the Lord came unto him saying, "I have ordained thee a prophet unto the nations," "Ah! Lord, God, behold I cannot speak: for I am a child." But it continued to echo in his ears, "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak." His concern was most intense. It was almost painful to his friends to see him. There he was in their



midst, diligently pursuing his business, mingling with them in their religious services, yet holding himself aloof from any active part in the exercises. The fire began to fade from his eye, and the rose from his cheek. His health began to decline. And yet amid all he was a pattern of piety. Holiness of heart and life was his constant end and aim. His conversation was "seasoned with salt, fit to minister grace to the hearers." He abstained from jesting and foolish talking, which he found hurtful to his soul, and destructive of his influence. Everyone that saw him knew that he had been with Jesus. Upon the streets, in his place of business, in the company of the irreligious, in the social circle, everywhere he was the same.

The decline of his health rendered it necessary for him to change his business. He accordingly made up his mind to leave Richmond and return to Fairfax county, which he did, as nearly as can now be ascertained, in 1822. His residence in Fairfax until his entrance upon the work of the ministry will form the subject of our next chapter.

We part with him here with feelings of melancholy interest. We are impressed with his piety. We admire his modesty -- his humility. We are forcibly struck with his conscientiousness, and with his strict propriety of deportment. We are almost ready to weep over the concealed conflict that is passing in his mind. It is a critical point in his history. But God's providence is over him, and an unseen hand is directing his paths. For there is a providence that shapes our lives, rough-hew them as we will.

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#### Chapter 4

#### RESIDENCE IN FAIRFAX FROM 1822 TO 1827

Mr. Childs' attachment to Mr. Allison and family -- His health -- Returns to Fairfax county -- Attempts merchandising -- Farming -- Teaching -- Fails in all -- Unhappy -- Call to the ministry -- Painful conflict with his convictions of duty -- Obtains a license to exhort -- Makes a round on the Calvert circuit with his father -- Licensed to preach -- Travels Carlisle circuit part of the year -- Obtains a recommendation to the Baltimore Annual Conference -- Is received and transferred to the Virginia Conference, and placed on the Albemarle circuit

Mr. Childs' residence in Richmond embraced that portion of his life in which our strongest and most abiding attachments are formed for places and for persons. He went to the city an inexperienced youth and a stranger. Besides Mr. Allison, his employer, he knew no one. Perhaps this was fortunate for him; for in this kind-hearted, Christian gentleman he found all that he could desire in a friend, a companion, or a judicious counselor and guardian of his youth. He became warmly attached to Mr. Allison, and also to his intelligent and amiable lady; and this attachment was mutual. There were also several young men, who joined the church about the time he did, whom he held in very high regard. These were his associates; with them he had held sweet converse, and walked to the house of God in company. They had been his companions in his early Christian conflicts. With them he had wept, and prayed, and rejoiced. Together they had visited the habitations of the destitute and suffering, and mingled their prayers and tears at the bedside of the afflicted, and his heart was wedded to them.

He loved the place of religious worship, where, for several years, he had met with God's people to hear the precious word of life dispensed. Richmond, with its hills and valleys, its hospitable firesides and sanctuaries, had become endeared to him. From the Capitol square, occupying an elevated and central position in the city, he had gazed upon the surrounding scenery until a picture was formed in his mind in which every locality and point of interest was limned [painted -- limn v. tr. archaic paint (esp. a miniature portrait) -- Oxford Dict.] in its appropriate colors. The majestic James, with its willow-tufted islands, its foaming rapids and bristling rocks; the far-stretching fields and woody hilltops beyond; the quiet-looking town of Manchester, imbosomed among trees and skirted with highly cultivated farms; the beautiful country-seats dotting the plains; and rising swells that mark the course of the river as it glides away to the ocean -- these had all made their impress upon his mind. He loved Richmond, and the kind friends of his youth that lived there; and it was not without a struggle that he gave it up as a place of residence. His health, however, seemed to require a change; and he therefore consented to do violence to his feelings in tearing himself from it. But till the day of his death he cherished the most affectionate regard for the friends he loved when a boy in Richmond.

On his return to Fairfax, he found things wonderfully changed. His brothers and sisters were gone; his father had broken up housekeeping; the old homestead was temporarily in other hands, and everything wore a different aspect. He had a relation still living in the neighborhood, and he entered his family as an inmate, not having yet determined on his occupation for a livelihood. At first he was at a loss what course to pursue. He felt a clear and powerful conviction on his mind that it was his duty to preach the gospel; but this he kept in his own bosom. He did his utmost to banish the thought, and to free his mind from the harassing and unwelcome impression, which almost utterly disqualified him for any other business. He attempted school-teaching, but this did not suit his health. He then turned his attention to farming; but in this he did not succeed. The providence of God seemed to be against him. From farming he turned his attention to merchandise. He opened a small store, but this did not prosper. Thus he was constantly changing his pursuits in life, but all without success.

Mrs. Allison, from whose letter we have gleaned the facts above, further adds -- "The Lord had other work for him to do, and the labor of his hands did not prosper. He was fighting against God; and so fierce was the conflict, that he was forced to the conclusion that he must preach or give up all pretensions to religion." And yet he studiously avoided any reference to the subject. He had never conferred with any one, and the 'concealment, like the worm in the bud,' was withering and sapping all his joys. Whenever he gained the consent of his mind to enter the ministry, then all was bright and joyous with him; but when again he began to hesitate and fight against his convictions of duty, then the heavens grew dark above him -- the lights of hope on his pathway paled and expired; and while he halted and endeavored to excuse himself, he found himself without a particle of Divine comfort. It was only while he held to his purpose to preach that he enjoyed the smiles of an approving God.

From exercises like these he was forced to the conclusion that he must preach or perish. He began to feel, as he had not, what that meaneth, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." In his moments of retirement and meditation, when the conviction was strong on his mind that no alternative was left him -- that he must, go out and call sinners to repentance or meet the doom of the servant who knew his lord's will and did it not -- he would resolve to open his mind freely to

some pious friend on the subject. But, strange to tell, when in company he seemed to shrink from the remotest allusion to the severe and painful mental and spiritual conflict that had for several years disturbed his peace, and, at times, seriously threatened his salvation. He saw no way of relief except in conversing with others in relation to his exercises of mind, and in embracing the first opportunity of entering the ministry, and yet he delayed carrying his purposes into execution. At length, to ease his conscience, he applied to the society of which he was a member for a license to exhort and to conduct public religious worship. He hoped that by taking this step his mind would be relieved and his spiritual enjoyments increased. His license to exhort is dated December 15th, 1825, and signed by Rev. William Prettyman. He held meetings in his neighborhood, and exhorted the people with great fervor and zeal. His labors were blessed by the Great Head of the church; and he felt that he was in the line of duty, but he was not content. There was yet a more extensive work for him to perform. But he continued strangely to strive to suppress the conviction that he must become a traveling preacher.

Mrs. Childs says, in a letter relating to this portion of his life, that, "Fortunately, for him at this time, he boarded with a relative who, with his wife, was unusually pious -- spending three hours every day in secret devotion. From these pious relatives he received, by precept and example, the help he so much needed. But still he was not at ease. He gave up one pursuit and tried another, but nothing he undertook seemed to prosper. He was striving against God -- praying all the time that He might send by whom he would, but not by him -- said he felt he had rather die than to go out as an itinerant Methodist preacher. After many and sore conflicts," continues Mrs. Childs, "he sought an interview with his father, who was then a member of the Baltimore Conference, and made known his exercises to him. He told his father all that was in his heart on the subject. The old gentleman heard attentively, and when he was done, replied, 'Well, my son, God has called you to the work of the ministry, and it is useless to contend longer with him. Get your horse and saddle-bags, and come, go with your father.' He obeyed, and immediately commenced a tour on the circuit with his father."

His father was then traveling the Calvert circuit in the State of Maryland; and by the time he had made two or three rounds with his son, he had him fairly initiated. The circuit embraced a section of the country in which a pretty fair specimen of Methodist itinerancy was presented to the novitiate. [novitiate n. (also novitiate) the period of being a novice. -- Oxford Dict.] He saw that he was to become accustomed to every variety of society and fare; that he was to inure [inure v. tr. (often in passive; foll. by to) accustom (a person) to something esp. unpleasant. -- Oxford Dict.] himself to privation and change; that he was to encounter the cold and heartless as well as to receive the greetings and welcome of the generous and cordial; that he was to preach to the large and intelligent congregation in the comfortable house of worship, and to a mere handful in the schoolhouse in some obscure part of the country; that he must press onward amid sunshine and clouds, smiles and tears, success and defeat, through summer's heat and winter's cold; and that he must not even "count his life dear to him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

This, his first year of service, embraced the winter of 1826. On the 29th of April of that year, he received a recommendation to the Baltimore District Conference for license to preach, signed, in behalf of the Quarterly meeting Conference of the Calvert circuit, by Joseph Frye, president, and Richard Brown, secretary. He was duly licensed by the District Conference, at its

session in the spring of 1826. A short time thereafter, he went to the Carlisle circuit, in the State of Pennsylvania, and traveled the remainder of the conference year under the direction of the presiding elder of the district.

We have no reliable data from which to gather anything of particular interest relating to his labors at this early stage of his ministerial career. From the surviving members of his family we have learned that, from the time of his entrance upon the work of the sacred office, he was more than ordinarily strict and conscientious. He set a high standard, and labored from the start to bring his life and experience up to it.

The Bible was his constant companion. One of his brothers says that he had a copy of the Scriptures at this time, which he had read and marked with his pencil till almost every page in it had a passage around which he had drawn a line. Over this precious book he had wept and prayed, till its leaves had been saturated with his tears, and many of them partly detached from the binding. Upon his knees, again and again, from the first verse of Genesis to the last of the Apocalyptic vision, he had read it through and through. In all his struggles upon the subject of his call to the ministry, this book had been his vade mecum. [vade-mecum n. a handbook etc. carried constantly for use. -- Oxford Dict.] It was always in his pocket, or at the place of his private devotions; and he had already become so familiar with its contents that he could, with perfect ease, quote almost any portion, giving at the same time the chapter and the verse.

At the close of the conference year he attended the session of the Baltimore Annual Conference, held in the city of Baltimore, on the 12th of April, 1827, and was received on probation, according to the usage of the church, in the traveling connection. When the appointments were announced, at the close of the session, he was not a little surprised to learn that he was transferred to the Virginia Conference. His previous acquaintance had been almost exclusively with the ministers of the Baltimore Conference; his relatives lived principally in the bounds of that conference; he had selected that as the field of his ministerial labor, and the announcement of a transfer to another conference was not only a matter of surprise, but was a source of trial to him. But the Baltimore Conference was full at that time, while the Virginia Conference stood in need of supplies. He therefore acquiesced in the arrangement, being assured that his fathers and brethren in the ministry deemed it best. Besides, he felt that in consecrating himself to the work, it was his duty to submit himself to the authorities of the church, and cheerfully to perform that work which, in their godly wisdom, they might assign to him.

He returned from the conference first to Fairfax, where he spent a short time with his relatives and friends; from Fairfax he went to Richmond, on his way to the Albemarle circuit, to which he had been assigned for the remainder of the year. In Richmond he stopped with his kind friend Mr. Allison. Some five years or more had elapsed since he left the city. Mrs. Allison, in speaking of this visit, says, in the letter referred to above, "The next I saw of him he came to our house, on his way to his appointment somewhere in the Virginia Conference, with saddle-bags on his arm, and the usual accouterments of the Methodist traveling preacher, and having on the round-breasted coat, so commonly worn by our ministers in those days. This latter I did not think in keeping with his years; and as I had always been in the habit of speaking very unreservedly to him, I ventured to remonstrate with him on the subject. He replied that I could not dislike the cut of the coat more than he did, and that he had adopted it purely to mortify his pride." He spent but a

few days in the city, which were occupied principally in renewing his old acquaintances and reviving the associations connected with his former residence in the place.

It was during this visit that he explained to his friends why he had so studiously avoided taking any part in public religious exercises while he lived in Richmond. But they all saw that he had entered the ministry with all his heart; that he had torn himself away from the world; that he had given up all to follow Jesus; and that his affections were placed on things above.

He went to his circuit, which embraced a large and beautiful section of Virginia, skirting the Blue Ridge Mountains. Nature nowhere spreads out a more fascinating picture to the eye than in this portion of the country. The valleys are fruitful and in a high state of cultivation. The country residences are neat and often elegant, while in every direction the eye is greeted by the magnificent swell of mountain ranges, shooting up their lofty, rock-crowned peaks in the clear blue heavens, and stretching away in graceful lines till mountain and sky are blended. Here, amid these hills and valleys and mountain gorges, Mr. Childs pursued his work with a zeal and devotion that really excited the astonishment of his people. He was "instant in season and out of season." His labors were abundant. Not content with the regular appointments, which occupied nearly every day of the week, he sought new fields of labor, preaching at night in private houses and in neighborhoods not supplied with the regular ministrations of the word. He did not labor in vain. The churches were quickened under his ministry, and sinners were converted to God.

We will close this chapter in his history with an anecdote connected with this part of his ministry, as furnished by Mrs. Childs. She says -- "The first camp-meeting he attended, he resolved, as he had often heard it sneeringly remarked that the young preachers preferred to instruct and pray with the female penitents during religious revivals, that he would confine himself to the gentlemen's altar, and scrupulously avoid conversing with the ladies even upon the subject of religion. Several days of the meeting passed, and although he had faithfully endeavored to do all he could, he was, nevertheless, without spiritual comfort; and at last he became so depressed that he came to the conclusion to leave the encampment. Just at this time, a female friend who was in the altar, in great distress of mind about her soul, sent for him to converse with her on the subject of religion. He had not been with her long before she was happily converted. He was then requested to talk with another, and still another, until several in rapid succession were converted around him, and rejoicing in a knowledge of sins forgiven. He then saw the snare which the great enemy of all good had laid for his feet, and resolved henceforth to go wherever duty called, and to labor wherever he found a sinner to point to Jesus."

We have now followed the subject of this biography till we have seen him fully engaged in the work of preaching Jesus and calling sinners to repentance. The commencement of his career is full of promise of extensive usefulness to the church. We find him a man full of zeal and full of the Holy Ghost. He is a man of prayer and of deep devotion to his high vocation. God had given him seals to his ministry, and he no longer doubted that his commission to preach the gospel. His labors bore the signature of the Great Head of the church. Thus encouraged and sustained, he went up to the Conference which held its session, in the month of February, 1828, in the city of Raleigh, N. C. From this Conference he was appointed to the Brunswick circuit.

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## Chapter 5

### BRUNSWICK AND CAROLINE CIRCUITS -- 1828 AND 1829

Entrance upon his work -- His reception -- Close preaching -- Revival -- Rev. J. G. Claiborne's account of his habits, labors, and usefulness -- Attends Conference -- Appointed to Caroline circuit -- State of the circuit -- Letter to Mr. Claiborne -- Death of his father -- Closes his labors on the circuit -- Attends Conference -- Appointed to the Mecklenburg circuit

On the adjournment of the Conference, Mr. Childs hastened, without an hour's unnecessary delay, to his new field of ministerial labor. It was his first year in charge of a circuit; and he seemed fully to appreciate the duties and responsibilities of his appointment. When he arrived within the bounds of his circuit he found himself among strangers; but he was everywhere cordially received, and everything was done that could be desired by the kind and hospitable people of his charge to render him comfortable and to make him feel at home among them.

At first, the apparently unsociable manner of Mr. Childs seemed to excite a little prejudice against him, with those, more especially, that had not formed his acquaintance. He did not spend as much time in social conversation with the families in which he visited as other ministers before him had done. He was habitually serious, and unusually grave for one of his years; and to those who were not intimate with him, he appeared to be somewhat captious [captious adj. given to finding fault or raising petty objections. -- Oxford Dict.] and censorious. He reprov'd sin in all of its forms, wherever he met with it. He talked plainly to worldly-minded professors of religion, wherever he found them. In the classroom, and in all his private associations with the members of the church, he faithfully reprov'd whatever he deemed wrong in them. Wherever he discovered external conformity to the fashions and customs of the world, he endeavored to correct it by gentle admonition and rebuke. He did not hesitate to ask a professor why he wore a breast-pin or a finger-ring? why she wore artificial flowers in her bonnet or costly decorations upon her person? and, after receiving the usual answers, proceed to admonish the person of what he regarded the evils of such indulgence. Scores of searching texts of Scripture were plied to the conscience in rapid succession -- appeals were made on the ground of consistency, and on the score of example and Christian influence. He left no loophole of escape.

He personally interrogated the members of his church wherever he met them, if the circumstances would at all allow of it, in relation to their personal Christian experience. On entering a house, he never took his seat, after kindly shaking each member of the household cordially by the hand and asking after the health of the family, before he proposed prayer; and while upon his knees in fervent supplication, he prayed the peace of God upon the house -- he prayed for every member of the family, white and colored, and asked that God might make him a blessing to all the inmates while he remained beneath the roof.

He was also remarkably strict in the observance of the Sabbath. In every family, privately, as well as in his public addresses, he strongly remonstrated against visiting, idle conversation; secular reading, political discussions, cooking, and whatever else he thought violative of the sanctity of God's holy day. He carried his views and practice so far as even to refuse to eat anything that was cooked on the Sabbath. No matter what family he was in, nor who might be

present, if he thought the conversation was too worldly for the Lord's day, he did not hesitate mildly to suggest a change of the topic.

All this, as may naturally be supposed, led to a good deal of conversation among his members and with the people of the world. Some condemned his course, while others approved. It was not long, however, before the influence of his example began to be felt. It was found that he did not preach one thing and practice another. His own life was found to be, in the strictest sense, in harmony with the principles which he laid down for the conduct of others. His daily walk was a practical comment upon the precepts which, from the pulpit, and in the private circle, he urged upon the people of his pastoral care. He recommended fasting and abstinence by example; and, while he exhorted his flock to abstain from all improper conformity to the world, he himself "crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." In every Christian virtue he was a pattern to believers. No one could turn upon him with the cutting rebuke, "Physician, heal thyself."

The effect of his daily walk and conversation was, in some instances, and not a few, to lead good and pious persons to suspect the genuineness of their own piety. His standard was so high, his life so blameless, and his experience so exalted and spiritual, that many, in comparing their own lives with his, really came to the conclusion that they knew nothing of true, experimental godliness.

We stop not here to pass any judgment upon his course of life at this period of his ministry. We simply state the facts. The circulation of such a man in the community created great interest. The people crowded to hear him preach, and many went away astonished at his doctrines. Some caviled, [cavil v. & n. -- v. intr. caviled, caviling -- usually followed by at, about -- make petty objections; carp.] some criticized, some censured, but for the most part, the congregations returned to their homes much displeased with themselves, and not without secretly resolving to profit by his instructions. The word of life dispensed by him, and his estimable and worthy colleague, the Rev. Samuel T. Moorman, began to take effect; and with the opening of the spring, the signs of a general revival everywhere became apparent. The membership was quickened, sinners were awakened, "and there was a noise and a shaking among the dry bones of the valley."

We have been favored with a communication from the Rev. John G. Claiborne, of Brunswick, containing many interesting recollections of Mr. Childs, a part of which relates to the portion of his life now under review. The following extract is made, in this connection, from this communication:--

Roslin, Brunswick county, Va., November 22d, 1850

Dear Brother:-- I have lately received your letter, requesting me to contribute to the materials which you are collecting for the life of the late Rev. John Wesley Childs. I very cordially avail myself of the opportunity to aid in fulfilling the will and the words of the Lord, that "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." Moreover, I shall, in performing a religious duty, pay an humble tribute of gratitude to the memory of a friend whose pastoral nurture, sanctified by the word of God and prayer, hath often ministered grace unto me when feeble and ready to faint through manifold temptations.

I became acquainted with the Rev. John W. Childs in the year 1828, the time of his first appointment as pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Brunswick circuit. The Rev. Samuel T. Moorman was his colleague. They were young men, and young in the ministry, but they were "true yokefellows," and gave no man any occasion to "despise their youth;" but were "examples of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Their circuit then embraced a district of country sixty miles in length and twenty-five in breadth, in which there were between twenty-five and thirty stated appointments. But they "endured hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and approved themselves the ministers of God, in labors abundant, in much patience, in fastings often, in watchings unceasing, "by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God;" for God divinely authenticated their ministry by the broad seal of his Spirit inscribed on the regenerated hearts of hundreds who believed. There were, I think, nearly three hundred added to the church on the Brunswick circuit that year. I was licensed a local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church the year of their ministry on this circuit. Duty and inclination associated me often with them, and they are still associated, "pars nobile fratrum," in my fondest and most grateful recollections. Propriety suggests that, in this communication, I should say no more of Brother Moorman.

I continue my recollections of Brother Childs at that period. He habitually arose from bed very early in the morning -- before the dawn of day in the winter -- and, careful not to disturb the family with whom he sojourned, or anyone occupying the same room with himself, he quietly kindled a fire when necessary, lighted a candle, and, with the Bible before him, on bended knees he silently sought in the Scriptures, with devout meditation and prayer, the deep things of God. Thus he exercised himself until others were up and preparations made for family worship: at this he was always present, and either led or accompanied with fervency of spirit. He often, and especially at night, succeeded the usual family devotions with singing an appropriate hymn or spiritual song, which rendered the occasion more impressive and profitable. He was richly furnished with the best effusions of the sweet bards of Israel, and, like their royal master, he sought to waft on melody his devotions to the throne of God.

His visits were all pastoral, and his pastoral offices were executed with fullness and fidelity; yet with such deference, meekness, kindness, and sympathy as dissolved in love every bitter ingredient, and rendered them grateful to the most fastidious taste, and healing and nourishing in their effects. He was, at this period, a man of one work, and, for the most part, of one book -- that book was the Holy Bible, and that work was the salvation of his own soul and of the souls of those to whom the providence of God gave him access. To this he devoted every faculty of body, mind, and spirit, with a diligence that never tired and a zeal that never abated, "constant in season, out of season," "warning every man, and teaching every man, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." He regarded his own heart with watchful jealousy, and rebuked with severe abstinence and self-denial every disposition to exercise its affections in matters of temporal interest or indulgence, "crucifying the flesh with the lust thereof."

In his pulpit ministrations, he sought not "excellency of speech or of human wisdom," but rigidly confined himself to the "word of the testimony," delivering his message in scriptural phrase, "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Hence, his sermons were not attractive to the vulgar taste by aught



that was new or brilliant; but were plain, practical, pointed, and often attended by the demonstration of the Spirit. His inordinate conviction of the deceitfulness and natural depravity of his heart was the principle which prompted the rigid discipline to which he subjected himself, and caused him to forego all special preparation, and to reject all adventitious aids in his public ministry.

Those who were unapprized of this principle, formed wrong conceptions of his condition and character. Some regarded him as a fanatic; others, as a monomaniac; and nearly all thought him ultra; but the generous sympathy and liberal indulgence which he extended to others indicated the spirit of love which animated his zeal, commended him to every man's conscience as a holy minister of God, and secured to him the veneration and cordial affection of all with whom he held converse. He left us at the expiration of the conference year, enriched by many seals to his ministry; endeared to the hearts and grateful affections of his people, and approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, having faithfully and successfully administered the word of truth.

The remainder of Rev. Mr. Claiborne's communication relates to a later period of Mr. Childs' life, and will therefore be reserved till we meet this man of God again, on the Brunswick circuit, near the close of his ministerial labors. The foregoing shows the type of the man at an early period in the history of his pastoral work. The people of his care became tenderly attached to him; and, at the close of the conference year, he left his charge, beloved by all. No man ever exerted a more holy and salutary influence upon the piety of a community than did Mr. Childs, in 1828, upon the Brunswick circuit.

He attended the session of the Conference held for that year, in the month of February, in the town of Lynchburg, Virginia, from which he was appointed to the Caroline circuit, lying northwest of the city of Richmond, and embracing a section of the state noted, at that time, for its church difficulties and religious controversies.

The Baptists, as a denomination, had long had the predominance in this portion of the country; and there had been some rather unfriendly controversies between the Methodists and Baptists, touching the mode and subjects of water baptism. The spirit of reform was also agitating the Methodist Episcopal Church at that time; and the Caroline circuit had not escaped its effects. Some few members had left the church, and unfortunate difficulties had arisen in some of the societies. The result was, scarcely anything was heard from the pulpit but the controversial discussions of points of Christian doctrine and questions of church government. In the midst of this sea of strife, the subject of this biography was thrown when the storm was at its height, and when shipwreck and disaster threatened the dearest interests of the church of Christ. But Mr. Childs was a man of peace; independent in his views and in his expression of them, but kind and respectful to those who entertained opposing opinions. He carefully abstained from participating in the controversies so rife in the land, and set himself to work to call off the minds of his people from the exciting and profitless subjects in debate. He clearly saw that in the endless strife about water, "the blood of sprinkling" was forgotten; that personal religion was scarcely once thought of, while party, party was everything. His soul sickened within him, he was ill at ease. He thought of the pleasant scenes of the past year on the Brunswick circuit; of the seasons of "refreshing from the presence of the Lord;" of the souls brought to Christ; of the prosperity of the church, and, looking

around upon the scene of spiritual desolation that met his eye on every hand, he was cast down and dispirited. This we learn from the following letter, which he wrote to his warm and devoted friend the Rev. J. G. Claiborne, of the Brunswick circuit:--

Caroline Circuit, July 24th, 1829

Dear Brother Claiborne:-- I have had but little intelligence from you since I left the Brunswick circuit. My prayer, however, has been that the great "Head of the church" would continue his blessings among you, and that we all may be kept through faith unto full salvation.

My labor this year is partly missionary; our circuit, having only nine classes in it, is spread over a vast tract of country, and is decidedly the largest circuit (though divided at Conference) that I have yet traveled. [W. W. Kenningham was his colleague that year.] We have succeeded in filling up our time as to appointments, having now twenty-two in four weeks, and yet there is ground unoccupied. With regard to vital piety, we may say, in truth, "a moral waste" presents itself -- not alluding to our members particularly, for I find here some of "the salt of the earth." But the general cry without seems to be "baptism, baptism;" as though this were "the great commandment," and all the law and the gospel hung upon it. Oh! when shall darkness be driven from the face of our earth, and the knowledge of God cover it as the waters cover the face of the great deep.

As yet we have but little fruit of our labor. We have had comfortable times among our members generally; though two have broken ground and gone to the Baptist brethren. We have some mourners, and a few converts. But I am not satisfied. My prayer is, that God would send a mighty flood of grace and salvation upon the people. My dear brother, add the strength of your prayers to the weakness of mine, and the Lord, in fulfillment of his promise, will give us the desire of our hearts.

I am as much, and even more than ever convinced that nothing will avail instead of heart-felt piety. It is my mournful experience to find that there are but few professors of religion -- and professors, too, among the Methodists -- whose company is not deleterious to a growth in grace. Indeed, so great has been the current of popular example, that I have been moved in some measure from my steadfastness; and the fatal temptation, "Take thine ease," has well-nigh swept me from my moorings. But blessed be God, my fixed purpose is "to give myself wholly to prayer" and to the work of the ministry; and, my dear brother, pray that my faith fail not. When with you, I have frequently remarked that without a true sense of God's presence we could do nothing toward reforming the world. I still feel this to be true. We may pronounce words, 'tis true, But what are they unless God be in the word and in the sound? Ah! Samson, with the jawbone of a dead animal, will do more than Goliath with all his armor. My God is still with me, and I think my whole soul is ripening for heaven. Oh when shall I meet you, with all our religious friends, in that happy place! My bodily health has been much impaired since Conference; though now I believe myself something better. However, Jesus is precious; and to die would be infinite gain. How often do I reflect upon the happy seasons we have had together, and immediately I look forward and ask, "Shall we meet in heaven?" All, all my Brunswick friends, shall I meet them there? While I ask the question, I could wet my paper with my tears. Tell them, oh! tell them all to meet me there.

Since I left you, my dear father has taken his departure for that happy country. For it he had been contending for more than fifty years. He left the world shouting "glory." Pray, how does your dear father travel on?

I hope never to forget you and the souls that God hath given you. Bear up amid all the difficulties of the way, and heaven will reward you at the last.

When I was with you, I was afraid that the temptation to ease was so great that a circuit where more hardness was to be endured would suit me better. I am here surrounded with Baptists -- some of whom are friendly, while others are hostile. Indeed, this seems to be their headquarters. Our Methodist friends are remarkably kind; and I have every reason to be satisfied, could I see souls justified and sanctified. O Lord, "revive thy work," and give me souls for my hire! I hope that you have a prosperous time, and that the good Lord is abundantly refreshing you and the church. Does your class continue to prosper? Do you experience heaven still in your own soul? Does Sister C\_\_\_\_ rejoice evermore? God is my witness that I love you and pray for you. That earnest wrestling with God, let us never give up, until our souls are landed safely in Abraham's bosom. I could say much more, for my heart swells within me. Love, I feel, shall be my song. Oh! for a gust of praise to go to the ends of the earth.

Affectionately yours,  
John Wesley Childs

This letter is a fair specimen of the spirit and style in which Mr. Childs wrote to his Christian friends at this stage of his ministry. Religion was his theme. He seemed rarely ever disposed to write or converse, for any length of time, on any other subject. He seemed to live in a spiritual atmosphere that invested him like a garment; and he carried it with him wherever he moved. We cannot fail to discover from this letter, as a specimen, that there was a great deal of ardor and zeal about him in his early days. He was warm and rapturous in his religious emotions. And yet his zeal and fervor were tempered with knowledge.

He refers, incidentally, in the letter above, to the death of his father. He was deeply affected by this bereavement, and yet he met it with extraordinary Christian resignation. The removal of his friends and relatives from earth only seemed to strengthen the ties that bound him to heaven. He looked upward through his tears, and saw the bow of God's providence bending upon the bosom of the dark cloud of sorrow above him, and then bowed submissively at the altar of resignation and said, "The will of the Lord be done." Amid all, he labored on -- never halting -- never wavering. He was unmoved by trials and afflictions.

As the year progressed, there was an increase of religious interest on the circuit. Sinners were awakened, and penitents converted: this revived and cheered him in his work. He was not content without seals to his ministry. There were but comparatively few Methodists in his circuit; these for the most part he had found good and true; and in all the classes he found deep, experimental religion; but his cry was, "Lord, give me souls for my hire."

In the month of December he wrote as follows to his friend in Brunswick:-- "Our circuit seems to stand fast, and I hope that vital piety is spreading in this country. We have a gradual

increase; and, blessed be God, I rejoice to say, some of them bid fair to make firm and useful members of the church. I am endeavoring still to pursue the road to that glorious city, of which it is said, 'There is no night there.' 'Tis true, if any man will get there, he must deny himself take up his cross, and follow the footsteps of his Master. But with Christ in my soul, all is easy; and I am making progress in Divine things. My soul is feasting from day to day on the bread of heaven. The enemy thrusts hard at me, that I may fall; but hitherto God has helped me, and I will trust and not be afraid."

He closed up his year's labors on the Caroline circuit, not without seals to his ministry. The people became warmly attached to him, and gave him up with a great deal of reluctance. The church on the circuit had prospered under his labors, and he left the charge in a better condition than he found it.

Up to this period, we find him everywhere the same self-denying, watchful, faithful Christian. His conscience was as tender as "the apple of an eye." He continued to guard against ease and slothfulness. These he feared and avoided as he would a serpent. He seemed afraid of himself. He speaks of being well-nigh swept from his moorings and carried off with the current. But no one ever saw, during this time, anything in his life or conversation that in the remotest degree indicated the slightest wavering in his course. The fact is, he was extremely jealous of himself, and often condemned himself, and wrote bitter things of himself, when, to the most scrutinizing eye, he presented an example as nearly blameless as could be expected from any human being. But his standard was high, and he saw defects that escaped the eyes of others.

He went to the Conference held for that year, in the month of February, in the city of Richmond, Virginia, and was appointed to the Mecklenburg circuit, where we shall pursue his life and labors in the next chapter.

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## Chapter 6

### MECKLENBURG AND GREENSVILLE CIRCUITS -- 1830 AND 1831

Early at his work -- His labor -- Revival -- Letter to Mr. Claiborne -- His habits and temper of mind -- Influence -- Successful year -- Goes to Conference -- Is appointed to the Greenville circuit -- Rev. B. G. Bass his colleague -- Walks round his circuit -- His reasons for it -- Difficulties on the circuit -- Attends Conference -- Is appointed to the Buckingham circuit

With his usual promptitude, Mr. Childs hastened to his circuit immediately on the adjournment of the Conference. The Mecklenburg circuit then embraced a very large district of country lying on the north side of the Roanoke river, and comprehending parts of Nottoway, Prince Edward, and Charlotte counties, with nearly the whole of Lunenburg and Mecklenburg. Nearly every day of the whole four weeks included in the tour of the circuit was filled with an appointment. Mr. Childs' health was not very firm, and yet he punctually met his appointments. He, perhaps, did not have sufficient regard to his health in this matter. It was of but little concern to him how the weather might be -- his appointments must not be neglected. Through rain and snow, and cold and heat, he pressed on; and scarcely ever failed to reach an appointment in due time. His

punctuality in this regard was remarkable. The people of the respective neighborhoods of his appointments knew that he would certainly be present, unless providentially hindered, and that he would commence the religious services at the time appointed. The consequence was, he rarely ever failed to have a congregation assembled at the hour at which he had given previous notice he might be expected to preach.

On the Mecklenburg circuit, as on those which he had traveled the two preceding years, he had, at first, to combat some prejudices which his unusual strictness excited. In the class-room, he went into a searching examination of his members, for the purpose of ascertaining, as clearly as he might be able, the state of piety among his people. The cold and formal he exhorted to increased diligence in the use of the means of grace; the worldly-minded he admonished and reproved; the light and trifling he rebuked; the erring he labored to reclaim. Some felt a little chafed and irritated at his course -- some complained; but this did not change his course. Steadily he pursued his work, and, in a very short time, his influence began to be felt, and the happy results were everywhere manifest. He preached in the most heart-searching manner, and then followed up the exhortations and instructions of the pulpit by private appeals and personal admonitions. He visited from house to house, spending a few hours with each family, reading the word of God and praying with the household. He sought out the sick and infirm, and ministered to their wants, temporal and spiritual, as his means and other circumstances would allow. No part of his duty as a preacher of the everlasting gospel and a minister of a holy religion was omitted. He was truly "instant in season, out of season," and wherever he went he left the savor of a holy influence and a godly example. The people everywhere "took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus."

We are dependent, almost exclusively, upon personal recollections of Mr. Childs for all that we know of the results of this year's labors. He did not preserve his diary, if indeed he kept one at this stage of his ministry, and we have but few letters written by him while on the Mecklenburg circuit. His correspondence, in fact, seems to have been limited at this time.

From a letter, under date October 24th, 1830, addressed to the Rev. Mr. Claiborne, he writes as follows:-- "Through the tender mercies of God I am spared, and my health is renewed, from day to day, as the eagle's. I can hardly tell what for; yet infinite Wisdom knows best. I am fully satisfied that 'life is war, eternal war with woe;' and, in general, 'they who bear it best, deserve it least.' But I learn,

'The rougher the blast, the sooner 'tis past --  
The tempests that rise  
Shall gloriously hurry our souls to the skies.'

Then let us submit, and with the Saviour say, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.' Even so assist, Lord Jesus.

"I fondly anticipated an interview with you at our camp-meeting. What prevented your coming? The weather was unfavorable, but the Lord was eminently present with us. [I would] Say about fifty professed to find the pearl of great price. The Lord is reviving his work on our circuit; and, in various places, the altars are crowded with mourners. But I long to see the Lord take to him his glory, and cover the earth with his knowledge."

We have no means of determining how many persons embraced religion, under his ministry, during the year; but from the allusion to the gracious work in progress at the time he wrote the letter from which the extract is made above, and from the statements of those who lived in the circuit during the year of his labors there, we learn that a very extensive revival prevailed, in which many sinners were brought to Christ.

From the sentiment of the letter just quoted, it would seem that Mr. Childs was indeed tired of the world. He seems to have prized life rather slightly. One would infer that he was rather "impatient to be gone." But no unjust inference should be drawn from the sentiment of this letter. It is very certain that he did not highly value life, except as a means of doing good. He did not live to eat and drink and to enjoy sensual gratifications. He mortified the body, and "crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;" and was ever looking forward to the hour of his dismissal from this life as the period of his introduction into real and substantial joy. And, with St. Paul, he was ever ready to say, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ." And yet he was resigned patiently to suffer and to toil, till his Master should call him away to his reward.

It must be admitted -- that, at this period of his ministry, he did not enter into the social enjoyments of life to the extent that one would think he innocently and profitably might have done. His presence instantly checked what many pious persons regard as innocent humor and mirthfulness; and he, at that time, scarcely ever indulged in anecdote of any sort, or in conversation that excited, at most, anything more than a smile. But his whole demeanor, withal, was so gentle and meek, and his spirit so devout, that one could scarcely see how he could act otherwise than he did.

He prayed so much, and conversed so constantly on the subject of religion, that he seemed, while treading this earth, to be the denizen of another sphere. So heavenly-minded was he, that he seemed rarely ever to indulge a thought of earth. He expended but little, exceedingly little, upon his person, and every surplus cent he had on hand he gave to the poor and to charitable and benevolent objects. There are hundreds now living who will bear testimony that the representation here given of his life rather falls below than exceeds the facts in the case. His presence seemed almost to excite a holy awe in the minds of those who were thrown with him; for he always seemed just down from the mount of communion with God. The effects of his example are felt to this day on the Mecklenburg circuit; and in eternity, doubtless, many will rise up to call him blessed as the results of his ministry in 1830.

He closed up his labors, and left his circuit beloved and lamented by all. On his last round on the circuit, the people hung upon him and wept when taking leave of him; but he commended them to God and the word of his grace, and said, "The will of the Lord be done!"

He went to the Conference, held in February, 1831, in the town of Newbern, North Carolina, from which he was assigned, for the ensuing year, to the Greenville circuit, adjoining the Mecklenburg on the east.

Having traveled two circuits -- the Brunswick and the Mecklenburg -- adjoining his new field of labor, he was not entirely unknown to the church in Greenville. Many of the brethren had

heard him preach, and had witnessed the results of his labors as a pastor and a preacher in the circuits just named. He was received very cordially, and a wide and effectual door was opened to him on his entrance upon his work.

As might be anticipated, various exaggerated representations of his habits of life, plainness of apparel, strictness in watching over his members, and so forth, had been made in some parts of the circuit. On his first round, the people flocked to see him as well as to hear him. Curiosity was soon gratified; and the congregations everywhere were deeply impressed by his preaching and manner of life.

The Rev. Rowland G. Bass was Mr. Childs' colleague on the Greenville circuit. He was a young man of deep piety, whose heart was fully in the work of the ministry; and, in many respects, he seems to have been peculiarly suited for companionship with Mr. Childs. He was docile, meek, self-denying, and impressible. It is not an improbable conjecture, that the manifestation of his piety took mold and complexion from the spirit, life, and labors of Mr. Childs. They had been associated together on the Mecklenburg circuit the previous year, where their acquaintance and friendship commenced; and from a letter written by Mr. Childs to Mr. Bass, immediately on the adjournment of Conference, we learn that Mr. Childs devoutly recognized the hand of Providence in again casting their lots together. In this letter, he says to his young brother and co-laborer, "Oh let us set out afresh to win the prize and labor for souls."

We have introduced Mr. Bass to the reader with some particularity, because of the intimacy and warm attachment which grew up between him and Mr. Childs, and because of the correspondence which was kept up between them till the death of Mr. Bass, which occurred in 1838. These men of God commenced their labors on the Greenville circuit with characteristic zeal and fidelity, and they did not labor in vain. The church was revived, and sinners were brought to the foot of the cross.

We are now called on, in the prosecution of the life of Mr. Childs, to introduce another feature in his history -- a feature which, in some sort, affected the whole of his subsequent life.

He seems to have taken up the opinion, that it was his duty to travel on foot while engaged in preaching the gospel. It, indeed, amounted to a solemn conviction upon his mind; and for many weeks he was singularly exercised on this subject. He clearly foresaw that it would expose him to the pity of some, and to the scorn and ridicule of others. He prayed over it, wept over it, and conversed with some pious persons in reference to it; and yet there remained the conviction in his conscience that he must walk and preach. After some time, as the spring began to open and the roads became good, he left his horse and took his saddle-bags on his shoulders, and in primitive style started round his circuit. He assigned, among other reasons, the following for adopting this mode of traveling:-- First: It was, as he believed, conducive to his health. Secondly: He could the more conveniently drop in with families on the way, and dispense the word of salvation in the by-paths of life. Thirdly: It was less troublesome and less expensive to entertain him. Fourthly: He thereby set aside the excuse that so many of his people framed to justify their neglect of the week-day appointments -- namely, that their horses were employed in the cultivation of the farm, and it was too far to walk to church. Fifthly: He thought it more truly apostolic.

These are a mere specimen of the reasons which he assigned for traveling on foot around his circuit. There was a great deal of opposition to his course; and many of his brethren remonstrated with him on the subject. But it was a matter of conscience with him; and whatever others might think, he believed it to be his solemn duty, in the fear of God, when his health and other circumstances would permit, to walk and preach. The subsequent parts of his life will show us that this was no transient conviction with him. It did not end with a single experiment. It was not the result of a mere whim or fancy. It was not an enthusiastic glare, that blazed up with brilliancy for an hour, and then expired forever. No: it was a settled conviction, that haunted him through life; and it will be seen that his religious enjoyments were more affected by this one thing than, perhaps, by everything besides. Let us not be hasty, then, in deciding upon the propriety or impropriety of his course. Let us hear him speak for himself as he frequently does, at a later period of his life. We admit that it is strange that he should have been, so singularly exercised, and for so long a time, upon a matter which, it would seem, could not be very difficult to settle satisfactorily. How long he continued to travel on foot around his circuit on his first experiment, we do not know; but, in the month of June, we find him writing to Mr. Bass in relation to some change in his appointments, and he says, by the way -- "Bodily infirmity has forced me to resume traveling on horseback."

His abstemious habits and abundant labors greatly enfeebled him; and in the absence of a sufficiently nourishing diet, he was not able to endure the fatigue of walking from appointment to appointment. And yet nothing short of absolute necessity could induce him to resume traveling on horseback. He says, he was "forced" by "bodily infirmity" to resume it. He must therefore have believed that, so long as he could walk and preach, he was in the path of duty in so doing. If the experiment had been followed by a loss of comfort, or an abridgment of liberty and success in preaching, he doubtless would have abandoned it, without being forced to do so by bodily infirmity. He was not an obstinate man. He had no pride of opinion in this matter; and we must conclude that the experiment made by him, only the more fully settled the conviction in his mind that, to be happy, he must adopt this mode of carrying the message of salvation to sinners.

He continued his labors, in the midst of bodily weakness and sore conflicts of mind, until the end of the Conference year. In December, 1831, in writing to his colleague he says, "I feel greatly encouraged still to mortify old nature, but weep and mourn that I have been so much like a broken reed. Oh, pray that God may heal me 'that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more.'"

There does not appear to have been any very extensive revival on the circuit during the year; and yet, in some neighborhoods, there were prosperous times, which continued, at a few of the appointments, up to the hour of leaving the circuit for Conference.

This was a year of more than ordinary trial to Mr. Childs. His mode of traveling excited not a little persecution. This he brought upon himself. He met it, and passed through it with that meekness and gentleness for which he was so remarkable. But his principal trials grew out of the excitement in some of the largest and best societies in the circuit on the subject of "Reform." Several of the leading members subjected themselves to exclusion from the church, and the exercise of discipline in these cases was a source of deep and painful anxiety to him. But he was firm and decided; and perhaps no one ever managed so delicate a matter with more caution and propriety than did Mr. Childs. The very persons who were excluded from the church, and who



voluntarily withdrew under his administration, continued, till the day of their death, to cherish the kindest Christian regard for him, and he for them.

The year's labors were closed up, and Mr. Childs repaired to the Conference, which met in the city of Norfolk, February, 1832. From this Conference he was appointed to the Buckingham circuit, lying south of James River, and between the city of Richmond and the town of Lynchburg. In this new field of ministerial labor we shall pursue his history in the next chapter.

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## Chapter 7

### BUCKINGHAM CIRCUIT -- 1832

His activity in his work -- Fidelity as a preacher -- Troubled again about walking and preaching -- Letter to his presiding elder on the subject -- Letter to Rev. R. G. Bass -- His faithfulness as a pastor -- Sanctification -- End of the year -- Attends conference, and appointed presiding elder of the Yadkin district.

We have now reached a period in the life of Mr. Childs from which we are better supplied with material for a connected history of his religious exercises and ministerial labors than we have been in the previous part of his biography. His correspondence had considerably increased, and from this year forward he kept a diary, fragments of which have been preserved; and from these, with the personal recollections which have been furnished us, we shall be able to lay before the reader a strictly authentic record of his every-day life.

Mr. Childs was early at his work, and with his accustomed diligence and zeal commenced his pastoral labors. His appointments were regularly met -- the classes were led -- the delinquents were looked after -- the erring were reproved -- the desponding were encouraged -- the sick and infirm were faithfully visited; and everywhere he went, his godly example, his earnest prayers, and his pious admonitions produced the happiest results.

From his diary we learn that he found great coldness and worldly-mindedness in some portions of his charge, while here and there he met with persons that he regarded as decidedly pious and deeply concerned for the prosperity of God's cause on the circuit. His great aim was holiness, and to this he everywhere labored to lead his people. He was not content with a low standard of religion, or with low attainments in experimental godliness. He preached on the subject, and urged it home upon the consciences and hearts of his members. He held the opinions of Wesley and Fletcher upon the doctrine of sanctification or holiness, and he scarcely ever preached a sermon in which he did not exhort those who had obtained justification to go on to perfection." On this subject he always grew warm and pathetic in a high degree, and as he added scripture to scripture on this vital doctrine, he never failed to quote, with extraordinary earnestness and power, the text, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The effect of his preaching and his daily walk and conversation was very soon apparent. The church became more prayerful -- the lukewarm were quickened -- the light and trifling became more thoughtful -- the congregations improved, and the signs of revival began to appear in every

direction. But, as constant and untiring as was his attention to the spiritual welfare of the souls committed to his care, he never forgot his own soul. Personal religion was ever the first concern with him. He kept up his habits of early rising, earnest and protracted private prayer, constant perusal of the Scriptures, close self-examination, unremitting watchfulness, and mortification of the flesh.

Strange to say, the subject of walking and preaching continued to exercise his mind. It, indeed, gave him great trouble, and he feared that he could not preserve a good conscience if he did not adopt this method of discharging his calling. He prayed over the subject -- sought direction from God, and did all he could to satisfy his mind as to his duty.

On the 21st of April, 1832, he thus writes in his diary: "How has my mind been variously exercised, during the last week or two, betwixt two ways that appear to be pointed out to me! Lord, direct me thyself -- uphold me -- suffer not my footsteps to slip. Thou art my portion, -- be my God and guide even unto death. Oh make me an efficient laborer in thy vineyard, and thy name shall have all the glory!"

One of the ways to which he alludes above, is that of walking from appointment to appointment, and from house to house, in preaching Jesus Christ to the people. Exercises of this character continued until the month of June in that year, when we find the following entry:-- "I have resumed my former mode of traveling on foot. Lord, thou knowest my object in so doing. Is it not to preserve a good conscience? Search me and try me, and discover if there be any wicked way in me. Oh give me the power of thy Spirit to uphold me through all the fatigue and opposition that I shall have to contend with! Oh refine me by thy grace from all the dross of nature! Let me be honest and open in all my movements." This is the language of one sincerely striving to do right.

A few days after the entry just quoted, he writes, June 14th:-- "Yesterday was, in many respects, a precious day to me -- called to see a man far gone with a cancer -- unconverted -- talked with him -- found he had engaged in the salvation of his soul, but had measurably fallen asleep again. He appeared to have his desires quickened -- and left him, not without hope that God would be gracious to him. Preached at Chestnut Grove -- words seemed to flow, and some appeared affected; but have not yet that power which, by the blessing of God, I hope to get, to enable me 'to do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of my ministry.' Traveled, [I would] say twelve miles [on foot] -- my mind, this morning, peaceful and happy -- my body refreshed, and hope to have strength to persevere. O Lord, help me to bring back the lost sheep of the house of Israel to thy fold."

The presiding elder of the district had remonstrated, the previous year, against his walking round his circuit, assigning several reasons for his opposition to such a course. When Mr. Childs resumed this mode of traveling on the Buckingham circuit, he deemed it proper to write to the presiding elder on the subject, which he did as follows:--

Buckingham Circuit, Virginia Conference,  
June 14th, 1832

Dear Bro. Early -- I hope you will not think me headstrong when I tell you I have again resumed traveling on foot. I see no other way (if my strength will allow) to save my own soul and clear my skirts of the people's blood. I think the Searcher of hearts knows that my object is to be found of him in peace, unspotted and blameless. If you think me a fool, as a fool then bear with me. However, if you think my course disgraceful to the cause of Methodism, and if you and the brethren here wish me removed from the charge of the circuit, most gladly will I become helper anywhere in your bounds.

We have had, I trust, some profitable meetings; but the people, in general, appear to be weary and dull in their religious feelings; though I think there is some quickening among them. Some places have been taken into the circuit, and there is a prospect of some good. But I am conscious I must be humble myself if I would have God work by me. Indeed, I have frequently been persuaded that, had the Lord done a great work by me, it would have been my ruin. Show me the way to true humility, and I will rejoice as those that take great spoil. To go on in the same dull round, without growing in grace, is more than I can consent to. And be it that I am mistaken in my view how to obtain what I want, it is not such a mistake as will expose me to one frown from my Judge, I verily believe.

Believe me yours,  
John Wesley Childs

N. B. What I have written above is, I believe, the honest sentiments of my heart. In addition, permit me to say, such is the apparent state of my lungs, without some such exercise, I should have to desist. Accordingly, my general plan is, to say it is for the benefit of my health.

J. W. C.

When it is remembered that Mr. Childs ultimately died of consumption of the lungs, who can say that the exercise which he took on foot, at the time of life now under notice, did not prolong his days? He says, "without some such exercise" he would have been under the necessity of giving up the pulpit. God, in his providence, may have led him into this path as a means of prolonging his life. The word of God says, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he will direct thy paths." Never did a human being more devoutly acknowledge God in all his ways, than did Mr. Childs, so far as we are capable of determining; and would it not imply a sort of skepticism to question that an all-wise but unseen hand directed his paths? We should be slow, at least, to censure or condemn his course, when he tells us that he verily believed, even if he were mistaken, his mistake would not expose him to a single frown from his Judge. What honesty of purpose is here! What humility! His course is not characterized by enthusiasm or rashness. Every step is taken with the utmost caution and deliberation, and it is evident that he would not have adopted this mode of traveling in the first instance, nor resumed it in the instance before us, had he not been impelled by the solemn and urgent behests of his own conscience. What solemn words are these which he uses to his presiding elder! "I see no other way (if my strength will allow) to save my own soul and clear my skirts of the people's blood."

The following entry was made in his diary on the 22d June:-- "What now is my object and aim? Is it not to follow the heavenly Lamb? Help me in all my ways to acknowledge Thee; and, in mercy, do thou direct my paths."

The letter below, written to his former colleague, the Rev. Rowland G. Bass, will give the reader a better idea of the exercises of his mind in relation to the subject of our remarks than anything we can supply:--

Buckingham Circuit, July 15, 1832

Dear Bro. Bass:-- Your letter was received yesterday. I have not time to say much, but will pen a few thoughts.

By the blessing of God I have persevered in walking, and feel encouraged so to do; though I fear it will subject me to a storm of opposition and persecution. Yet if God be with me, all shall be well -- indeed the Saviour says, "Blessed are ye when men shall separate you from their company." The more I consider the subject, the more am I convinced that the time has come when they will not endure sound doctrine. There can be no doubt that the great idol that is now generally set up is dress; and he that will not bow down and worship may expect to be handled roughly. However, there is no other way to heaven than by the way of tribulation. Let us then keep the end in view, and prudently yet boldly follow the teachings of the word and Spirit of God. Far am I yet from being what I believe to be my duty as well as privilege; yet with the apostle, in my humble manner, can say, "I follow on, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." I need your prayers; and be assured that I do not cease to pray for you -- it would be strange were I to forget you. Brother, put on the whole armor of God, and bid defiance to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

I have reason to be very grateful to the Lord that, as yet, I have sustained no inconvenience from the source which caused me to stop last year. For some time I have thought it was a strong temptation of the wicked one. Oh, that God would give us "the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove!" His grace will be sufficient for us, if we do our duty. Here is the point; but alas! how weak am I. With the poor, I can do tolerably well; but in the presence of the rich, oh how cowardly! Pray that the diseases of my fallen nature may be entirely healed.

I hear you have lost your horse. If you think he labored under any disease when you got him, let me know. At any rate (if you need it) I will cheerfully assist you in the purchase of another. Or, you might take mine, if you wish, and use for the present. But the disciple's way is the safest. Oh, keep a good conscience, and it will keep thee!

Pray for your affectionate friend and brother in the Lord,

John Wesley Childs.

One with whom Mr. Childs was very intimate, and with whom he corresponded more freely than with almost any one else, and who became acquainted with him while he traveled the Buckingham circuit, thus writes of him:-- "You know he was always kind, polite, and affable to

all; but in his intercourse with men, he seemed to avoid the company of the wealthy and influential, generally. His course in this respect was the result of the impression that his mission was chiefly to the poor of this world, and a fear lest he should insensibly drink into that spirit so congenial to flesh and blood. When in conversation on this subject," continues the writer "how often, and with what feeling, have I heard him quote the following:

"Keep me from the great and wise,  
Till they sink in their own eyes,  
Tamely to thy yoke submit,  
Lay their honors at thy feet."

And whenever he found any among that class of this spirit, no one ever sped with more willing feet to do them good than did he."

This extract in some sort explains the remark made by him in the letter above, that he could get along tolerably well with the poor, but that in the presence of the rich he was cowardly. The fact is, he could not be induced to conform to the customs and maxims of the world; and when thrown into the circles of the gay and fashionable, he could not exactly accommodate his conscience to a compliance with their views and habits, and he therefore felt that his presence was not so agreeable to such circles as he could desire it to be; nor was he so easy and happy as with those whose views and practices more nearly conformed to his own.

At this time, Mr. Childs dressed in an extremely plain style, but always neatly. He arose about four o'clock in the morning, and at an early hour he was ready to start to his appointment. His arrangements were made to call on several families by the way. When weary, he would sit awhile and read, beneath the shade of some old forest oak; and then, in nature's great temple, kneel upon the carpet of moss at his feet, and pour out his heart to God in prayer for his guiding presence and sustaining hand. Then again he would stop at the humble house of some poor laboring man, where the voice of prayer was rarely; if ever heard, and spend some time in reading to the family, either from the Scriptures or from some religious book, and then engage in prayer for God's blessing upon all the inmates of the house. These calls were productive of -- great good. Thus he would proceed on his way to the church, where he rarely ever failed to meet a good congregation, and to them he would dispense the word of life with almost unexampled earnestness and effect.

His preaching was close, searching, and scriptural. His appeals were pungent and stirring. The formalist in religion never failed to get his share. Members of the church who lived in conformity to the world were "cut off at the knees." He laid the truth, like burning coals of fire, upon their consciences; and after showing their inconsistency, and pointing out, in the clearest manner, the evil results of their course of life, he would then propound the most heart-searching interrogatories to them -- such as, "Can you kneel at your dressing-table, and ask God to bless you, while you, with care, are decorating your person?" "Can you implore the smile and blessing of God upon the party of pleasure in which you mingle?" "Do you feel as deep a solicitude for the 'ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,' as for the external ornament of the perishing body?" "Are you not more concerned to appear well in the eyes of your fellow-creatures, than to present an humble and contrite heart to God?" With questions like these he would press the truth upon the heart, until

the deepest convictions were riveted upon the minds of his hearers, that, to be Christians in deed and in truth, they must not be conformed to the world.

The piety of the church, here, as on the other circuits, improved under his ministry; and the work of revival commenced.

In the month of August, a camp-meeting was held on his circuit, which was attended with the presence of the Great Head of the church, and much good was accomplished. There was great interest manifested by the professors of religion on the subject of "perfect love." Many sought it, and sought it earnestly. This special interest was excited by the preaching of Mr. Childs. It was a theme on which he dwelt with peculiar emphasis. He did not at that time publicly profess to enjoy the blessing; and yet he gave good evidence of this state of grace. In a private conversation, however, with an intimate friend, at this meeting, he more than intimated, at least an humble persuasion that he had attained to this blessing while he was living in the city of Richmond. He stated, in the conversation alluded to, that some time after his conversion he became almost a formalist in religion -- that his pride well-nigh ruined him -- that almost every spark of vital piety had expired in his heart. In this state, he said, he often felt that, if religion imparted to its possessor no more comfort than he enjoyed, it was not worth the struggle it cost him to maintain the profession of it. He determined, if there were a better way, to find it. In this state of mind he sought direction from an old member of the church, whose advice came near proving his overthrow. Such was his anguish and distress of mind, that he almost, at one time, determined to abandon the effort to save his soul. He however did not turn his face away from the cross; but continued to seek God until he obtained the witness of an entire consecration to God and His service. Whether Mr. Childs really considered that he obtained the blessing of sanctification, as understood in Wesleyan theology, at the time referred to, we are not prepared fully to say; nor is the evidence very clear that he really made a public profession of this attainment at the time of which we now write; but in after-life he often refers to his experience of divine things while on the Buckingham circuit, and says that for some months of this year he enjoyed the blessing of sanctification, or perfect love. In writing to a friend on this subject, in November of this year, he says:--

"Oh! look to Jesus, he is 'able to save to the uttermost,' and will in no wise cast you off. Dare not distrust your God; and remember, it is his blood and righteousness we make our only plea. Who can be unsuccessful that flies to this? Oh! I think, if I had a thousand souls, all should be ventured on Jesus. I long to rejoice with you in having your enemies put under your feet. Wrestle with Christ in prayer, and you shall know that our God is faithful, and will come, and will not tarry. If you have not read lately, I would advise you to peruse Mr. Wesley's sermon on the devices of Satan; and if Fletcher's letters are at hand, a look into them might be of service to you ... I feel that God is good, and my heart, I trust, pants after him; though I want more, and I hope nothing less than the full fruition will ever satisfy me. I want wisdom to shape my course to the glory of God and men."

Mr. Childs continued his labors with unabating zeal up to the day he left his circuit for Conference, which met in February 1833, in the town of Petersburg, Virginia.

His ministry was not crowned with as much success on the Buckingham circuit, as it had been on some of his previous charges; but he did not labor in vain. The church was edified, and its

spirituality greatly increased under his pastoral care. The membership, generally, here, as on other circuits, became warmly attached to him. They loved him for his piety, for his fidelity as a pastor, for his direct and faithful manner of preaching, and for his kindness and sympathy as a friend. The poor, especially, were perfectly devoted to him; and when the hour came that was to separate him from them, they hung upon him with tears and pronounced the richest blessings upon him. He had sympathetic heart; and in separating from his people, he felt, and felt deeply; but, with his usual acquiescence in the allotments of Providence, he said, "the will of the Lord be done."

He attended the Conference; and, contrary to all of his expectations, and, it would seem, in opposition to his preferences, he was appointed presiding elder, and assigned to the Yadkin district, lying principally in the state of North Carolina.

In this new and untried field of ministerial toil we shall take up his life in the following chapter.

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## Chapter 8 YADKIN DISTRICT -- 1883

The office of presiding elder -- The Yadkin district-- Author's first acquaintance with Mr. Childs -- His attention to his work -- Impression he made on the district -- Troubled in mind about walking and preaching -- Letter to Miss Rives -- Letter to Mr. Bass -- Great revival -- Camp-meetings -- A thrilling anecdote -- Extracts from his Diary -- Letter to Mr. Bass -- Diary -- Anecdote -- Increased earnestness upon the subject of sanctification -- Close of the year -- Trip to Lynchburg, Va. -- Thence to Richmond -- Thence to Raleigh -- Conference -- Returned to the district -- Goes To Lynchburg -- Extract from his Diary on the day of his marriage

This year introduces Mr. Childs into an entirely new and different sphere of labor. To him nothing could have been more unexpected, and yet he submitted meekly and quietly to his appointment.

The office of presiding elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church is one of very great importance in the present economy of the church. In the absence of a bishop, a presiding elder is clothed with nearly every prerogative of that high functionary. It is his duty to exercise a general supervision over all "the elders, deacons, traveling and local preachers, and exhorters in his district; to change and suspend preachers, during the intervals of the Conferences, as the Discipline directs; to oversee the spiritual and temporal business of the church; to see that every part of the Discipline be enforced; to decide questions of law in a Quarterly Conference;" and especially to watch over the young preachers in his district, direct their studies, correct their improprieties of conduct, and train them up for usefulness in the ministry.

A mere glance at these disciplinary duties of a presiding elder, will convince anyone of the importance and responsibility of the post. Mr. Childs, on his entrance upon the duties of his office, seemed duly to weigh and appreciate the importance of the trusts committed to his hands.

The tract of country embraced in his district was all new ground to him. He was entirely unknown in every part of it. The Conference, at that time, being very large, and all the circuits to which he had been assigned lying very remote from the Yadkin district, he was without an acquaintance, except among the preachers, in all his bounds. In a very short time, however, reports in relation to the extraordinary piety, extreme plainness, and heart-searching preaching of the new presiding elder, were circulated in every part of the district. Curiosity was everywhere on tiptoe to see him, and to hear him.

The Yadkin district included a large extent of territory, lying principally in North Carolina, and stretching from the beautifully undulating hill country of Guilford and Orange counties to the top of the Blue Ridge mountains in the northwestern part of the State. It was traversed by the Dan and Yadkin rivers, which rise in the secluded dells of the mountains, and after winding along under the beetling rocks and holly-crowned cliffs, break away, in bold and majestic sweep, through some of the most fertile and beautiful valleys that have ever been brought under cultivation. To one who is fond of natural scenery, there is scarcely a more fascinating region in all the older settled portions of our country, than was included in the western portion of the Yadkin district. The counties of Surry, Wilkes, and a part of Iredell, presented a continued succession of mountains, with graceful valleys intervening. Many spots are now remembered, from which the eye of the traveler is greeted with as splendid landscapes as ever entranced the imagination of the artist, or stirred the heart of the poet.

Every variety of life was presented in this extensive field of ministerial oversight and labor. Along the rich and highly cultivated low grounds that mark the courses of the larger streams, might be found the wealthy farmer, with his highly polished and educated family around him, while on the intervening ridges, and on the mountains, life was met with in its more rustic and uncultivated forms.

In the midst of this interesting district of country, we now find the subject of our biography. The author well remembers the first time he ever saw him. It was a short time after he got on his district, at his first quarterly meeting for the Guilford circuit, held in the little town of Greensborough. The congregation had convened, which was unusually large for Saturday. All eyes were turned toward him as he entered the door, and walked up the aisle to the pulpit. He was dressed in a plain suit of blue cassinet; he wore a white cravat, with his collar turned down; his hat was something of the Quaker style. His countenance was placid, slightly shaded with apparent anxiety, and yet differing in expression from anything we had ever seen. He ascended the pulpit with that gravity and solemnity which become the sacred desk; and after remaining for awhile in private prayer, he arose from his knees, and sang, by himself, the hymn commencing,

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers;  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
While life and thought and being last,  
Or immortality endures."



There was a subdued sweetness in his voice, and an air of devotion in his manner, that singularly affected the audience, and when he arose to commence the services, the whole congregation was moved to tears.

His text on the occasion was taken from Matthew xvi. 24: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." His treatment of the subject was exceedingly easy and natural. He quoted several passages from Mr. Wesley's sermon on the same text. On the subject of self-denial he enlarged, and dwelt with great earnestness. Never shall we forget some of the views he presented on this point. He urged self-denial in relation to the indulgence of the appetite -- in relation to dress -- in relation to the indulgence of the flesh in its clamors for ease and rest; and then went on to animadvert on certain habits which men formed, which he thought should be abandoned by the disciple of Jesus Christ. He alluded to the use of tobacco, and various other luxuries, which were expensive, and which he thought should be given up by Christians; as means would thereby be placed at the disposal of church members which might be appropriated to the relief of the poor, and to the various benevolent enterprises of the church. In relation to tobacco, he remarked, that the taste for it had to be cultivated -- that it was exceedingly offensive to the natural appetite -- that its use was expensive -- that the indulgence was attended with inconvenience, both to the consumer, and to those associated with him; and, therefore, on these several accounts should be abandoned, especially by the follower of Christ, who was hastening to the bar of judgment to account to his God for the manner in which he had expended his Lord's money. "Give it up," said he. "Leave it to the horn-worm, and the goat of Tobago. Save your money to give to God's poor children -- to send the Gospel to the destitute, and to further the cause of the Redeemer in your midst."

The sermon produced a remarkable effect upon the hearers. His views on the subject of dress, and eating, and kindred topics, were all startling; and not a few began to think that they had the whole of the religious life to begin anew. The discourse was a subject of remark in every circle; and the effect was to draw out a very large crowd to hear him the next day. And in this way he commenced his ministry on all the circuits of his district.

It was exceedingly difficult to gainsay his views. Many thought he carried them too far, in relation to dress, the indulgence of the appetite, &c.; but those who objected admitted that there was great force in what he said -- that his views were strongly fortified by scripture -- that his reasoning seemed conclusive, and that it was not an easy matter to mark the point where he passed beyond the golden medium, which should be held and maintained by all true disciples of Jesus Christ.

At an early period in the year the work of revival commenced -- first in the church, among believers, and then among the unconverted. As the camp-meeting season approached the work increased in power, and depth, and extent; and we do not exaggerate when we say that thousands were brought to God at the meetings which he attended. But we must drop back and take up the year more in detail, and in the order of its events, as they stand connected with the life of Mr. Childs.

He attended punctually to all his official duties, growing out of his new relation to the church. His quarterly meetings were all attended, and the business of the quarterly Conferences

transacted in the most orderly and devout manner. He presided with the utmost kindness and respect to every member, but always with firmness and decision. He was faithful in administering reproof whenever it became necessary in the discharge of his office. Sabbath Schools were always inquired after; and whenever it was in his power, he visited them in person, and prayed with the children.

But it is evident he did not feel that he was in the work which suited him best as a minister of the Gospel. He preferred the pastoral oversight of a circuit. He had certain convictions of duty that he could not carry out into practical effect as presiding elder of a district. In a word, he could not walk and preach. The distance from one appointment to another was too great; and yet, he seems to have been constantly haunted with this conviction. This subject forms such a prominent part in his thoughts and religious experience, and is so frequently introduced in his diary and correspondence, that we are compelled to allude to it again and again, in order to preserve a faithful record of his life. Below we give a copy of a letter written by him to Miss Martha S. Rives, the lady who subsequently became his wife, in which he alludes, incidentally, to this subject, as a source of great trial to him.

Patrick County, Va., April 12, 1833

Dear Sister Martha:-- In compliance with my proposal, I write to inform you that, through the goodness of God, I arrived in time for my first appointment on the district, and am tolerably well.

I hope that you are steadily pursuing the things eternal -- casting this weary world with all its trappings behind you. I am more than ever convinced that nothing short of the continued energy of the Holy Ghost resting upon us can enable us to do this. We soon grow weary and faint in our minds; and whenever we lose for a moment, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," we take up with the poor baubles of time and sense to supply their place; or, as the apostle has it, "we build again the things which we once destroyed." The more apt we are to do this, because there are so few witnesses of the "great salvation" around us. To instance, who are inviolably meek, gentle, and patient, among all your acquaintance? Many, I hope -- few, I fear. Yet if the Scriptures be true, this we must enjoy, or never see the unclouded face of God in peace. Let us not deceive ourselves then in these important and awful matters. How very easy it is to think well of ourselves, because others do so. I fear I have erred on this score. Yet, blessed be God, I see the delusion, and the Lord assisting me, will steer clear of this rock. I am sensible that I do not, and lately have not enjoyed all that is my privilege. Various causes have existed. 1. In going to Conference and returning it is almost impossible to be regular in one's habits. 2. I know that self-denial, and hearing the daily cross have been; in a great degree, wanting. However, I rejoice in God, that this has been a day of uncommon nearness of access to the mercy-seat. He has, in some good degree, healed me of my diseases, and my soul is rendered more vigorous to run the race set before me. I have covenanted afresh, -- may my vows never be broken.

I am more clearly convinced that, in consequence of the disordered state of this world, a true Christian must run the risk of being thought "beside himself," -- and must consequently lose his good name. Oh! that God would give us courage to face these difficulties, and "count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Let it be our constant prayer, --

"Let me gain my calling's hope,  
O make the sinner clean!  
Dry corruption's fountain up,  
Cut off the entail sin.  
Take me into thee, my Lord,  
And I shall then no longer rove;  
Help me, Saviour, speak the word,  
And perfect me in love."

God has done much for you, and I hope the above prayer is already answered in you. I know it has been again and again in me. Pray, oh, earnestly pray that it may again be accomplished in me with mighty power! then I shall be properly commissioned to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. I hope that sister E. is "going on to perfection," seeking to be "crucified to the world, and the world to her." Encourage Mary to be diligent in reading and prayer; and though we should not expect too much from one of her tender years, yet, let us take heed that we do not discourage her.

Peace be with your spirit.

Sincerely yours,  
John Wesley Childs

We copy his letters, nearly entire, for the reason that they contain so much in relation to his personal experience. They supply a better view of his character, exercises of mind, and every-day life, than can be derived from any other source.

The following extract from a letter written on the 19th April, to his devoted friend, the Rev. Rowland G. Bass, will give the reader a hint of his views in relation to his new position as presiding elder: --

"I still find difficulties in the way; but "blessed be God, he deigns to pour into my soul occasionally the oil and wine of consolation. Yet the fullness, the plenitude, is what I want. Help me still by your prayers, for I feel that I need them more than ever. Indeed, I have been seriously exercised about trying to get clear of my task. I wish to do nothing rashly; but I fear, sometimes, I should have objected firmly. But then there is the hope of doing more good -- of being more extensively useful. Yet I fear, and tremble. None but God can deliver me, I know, and bring my little bark safely to the desired haven."

Whatever views we may entertain in relation to the conviction which seems to have given him so much trouble, we cannot but sympathize with him in his seasons of darkness and despondency growing out of this cause. He was honest in his convictions. He sincerely believed it to be his duty to bear his message on foot, and he could not overcome that conviction. He labored to do so; but it was only when he consented to it that his peace of mind was uninterrupted. There must have been some hidden cause for this that we are not able to understand; and we are

compelled to leave it just as he presents it, without attempting to solve the difficulties which it suggests to our minds.

In the month of June, Mr. Childs gave his correspondence with Miss Rives a turn which it had not previously taken; and as it presents many points of singular interest, we will defer any further extracts from it, till we arrive at a period in which we can lay the whole before the reader without interruption, and in a connected form. Suffice it to say, in this connection, that he made proposals of marriage with her; and as "the course of true love never did run smooth," it is but just to suppose that his mind was more or less affected by the different aspects which that stream presented, as it flashed and sparkled in the sunlight, or darkened beneath the folds of the portentous clouds which threw their shadows upon its bosom.

As the summer advanced, his popularity increased, and his influence became very great. His society was sought by Christians of all denominations; and he became a universal favorite in every part of his district.

He commenced holding camp-meetings as early as the month of July, and kept them up till the middle of October. These meetings resulted in the conversion of a large number of persons, and in the improvement of the piety of the church. At most of them he preached earnestly and powerfully on the subject of sanctification, as held by the Methodist Episcopal church, and not a few were stirred up to seek for that blessing; and at several of his meetings considerable numbers professed to obtain it.

Never shall we forget some of the scenes of that camp-meeting season. Occasions are now remembered in the Randolph, Guilford, Stokes, and Davidson circuits, where there were wonderful displays of Divine power in the salvation of the people. It seemed often as though heaven had stooped to earth, and

"The men of grace had found,  
Glory begun below."

And in the midst of the greatest excitement, -- when Christians were rejoicing, and sinners were crying for mercy, he might be seen, bending over the pulpit, or out in the congregation, encouraging penitents, singing the high praises of God, or urging the ungodly to fly from the brink of ruin to the expanded arms of the Redeemer. He conducted the exercises himself. He was always at the public prayers in the morning -- always in the pulpit at the time for preaching; and such was his influence, that he could preserve the best order in the largest congregations with the utmost ease, and generally without giving offense to any one.

We shall stop here to give a narrative, of a most painful and melancholy character, growing out of an incident that occurred at one of his camp-meetings, in the month of August 1833.

Mr. Childs had preached on Sabbath morning with unusual power and effectiveness. The whole congregation was deeply impressed; and in every direction sinners, cut to the heart by the power of God, were weeping and praying for mercy. Seriousness was depicted on every countenance. An almost oppressive solemnity reigned over the immense concourse that were

congregated on the encampment. The altars were crowded with inquiring penitents; and there was scarcely a careless or unconcerned person to be found in the grove. Mr. Childs, according to his usual custom on such occasions, walked out into the congregation, and conversed with such as attracted his attention, upon the subject of religion. Passing about from one to another, he came to a gentleman, well known in the county, who appeared rather indifferent, and he kindly spoke to him about his soul. The man was an avowed infidel, and was engaged in a traffic well adapted to blunt and destroy all the finer sensibilities of the human heart. He was wealthy, and proud. He disdained religion. When Mr. Childs spoke to him upon the subject, he treated the matter with the utmost levity and contempt. He was tenderly besought to think more seriously, and to speak less rashly about a matter in which he really had so deep an interest. But he grew angry, and cast every indignity that he could upon the gentle and holy man that sought to lead him to Christ. Mr. Childs proposed prayer; and all around him knelt, and became profoundly silent, except the gentleman in question; and as Mr. Childs began to pray for him, that God would open his eyes to see his condition, and move his heart to make him feel how awful and perilous was his state, the man began to curse him; and with all conceivable oaths and blasphemies he continued to vent his feelings of malignity and contempt, until Mr. Childs closed his prayer; he then turned away in a rage, and in a short time left the campground, and returned to his home, which he reached about the going down of the sun. He sat for a while in the long piazza in front of his house, and conversed sparingly with his family. As the twilight deepened, and night let drop her curtain, he commenced walking up and down his piazza. Presently his tea was announced, but he refused to join his family at the table, saying that he felt a little indisposed, and did not feel like eating any thing. He continued to pace his piazza, until it was time for the family to retire for the night. His wife requested him to go to his chamber. "No," said he, "not now. Leave me alone for the present." She urged him to go in from the night air; that he was further endangering himself by his exposure. "Let me alone," said he, as she insisted upon his leaving the piazza. "When I go in at that door," said he, solemnly, "I shall come out no more, until I am carried out to my grave." At first his wife was startled; but she recovered herself, and remonstrated with him for using such language, and indulging such gloomy feelings. Said he, "I cursed the preacher today -- I did wrong. He is a good man, I doubt not, and I should not have treated him as I did: and now I am going to die, and I shall go to hell. I ought not to have cursed that man." She continued to expostulate with him; told him that he was depressed, and low-spirited, and did what she could to relieve his mind. But he persisted in saying that he was going to die, and that when he retired that night, it would be for the last time.

At a late hour he went to his bed; but, alas! to rise no more. In the morning he was found quite ill. Medical aid was called in, and everything was done for him that could be to give him relief. But he told them it was all in vain -- that he should die and go to hell -- that his case was hopeless for this world and the world to come. He grew worse; and it admits of a doubt whether the dying chamber of any man ever presented a more terrific and heart-appalling scene than did the chamber of this miserable man. He sent for the pious tenants on his farm to come and sit by him and keep the devils out of his room. He said that the multiplied sins of his wicked life were like so many demons tearing his bleeding heart. Some attempted to direct his mind to the Redeemer as the Saviour of sinners. "Oh!" said he, "I have rejected the last offer; and I have cursed the minister who made the tender of salvation to me in the name of Jesus."

The scene was too awful to behold. His neighbors fled from his presence, and his words of despair and remorse and unavailing regret haunted them wherever they went. He sent for three men who had been engaged with him in the same immoral traffic. They came; and with the earnestness of a man clinging with a trembling grasp to the last eternity-insulated promontory of time, he besought them to abandon that traffic -- to seek the pardon of their sins and escape, while they might, the hell of endless horrors to which he was inevitably doomed. They promised him faithfully that they would obey his dying request. The scene grew still more frightful. Despair -- utter despair was depicted in his face. His eye seemed to be kindled as with a spark from the pit of hell. His voice unearthly. He called his friends to his bedside for the last time. Said he, "I am dying. When I am gone you will all say that I died frantic and out of my senses. This report will be spread through all the country. Now," said he, "I am perfectly in my senses. I never was more rational. I know what I am now saying, and all that I have said; and I now make this statement, that what I have said may not be lost upon you." He then, with his remaining strength, cried out in the most startling accents -- "The devils are around my bed -- they wait for me -- they mock my dying struggles, and as soon as I am dead they will drag me to the hottest place in hell." These were his last words.

The effect of this man's death upon the whole community, for many miles around, might be seen in the saddened and gloomy countenances of every one that heard the mournful tidings. For several weeks, the whole country wore an air of sorrow and melancholy grief.

The three men who promised him that they would reform, did so for a while; but finally returned to their former employment, and, painful to relate, all three of them died suddenly, and without an hour for repentance. One of them died of cholera; another was drowned by the burning and sinking of a steamboat on a western river; and the third by a sudden visitation of God.

Names have been suppressed in this narrative, for the reason that we wish merely to relate the facts without inflicting any additional wound upon the surviving friends or relatives of the deceased. "Touch not my prophets, and do mine anointed no harm."

In using Mr. Childs' diary, we shall abridge his entries, as there is comparatively but little variety.

His diary was entirely private, and was intended for his own improvement. He wished to note his own daily Christian experience for the purpose of self-examination; and that he might be able, as he progressed in life, to survey more accurately the path over which he had traveled. Until about the first of November of the year now under notice, he made his entries at irregular intervals; but, from this time forward, for two years, nearly, he made his entries almost daily.

October 11th, 1838, he writes -- "O Lord, I confess my backslidings unto thee. Be pleased to heal me for the sake of Jesus, and give me the true Christian courage to do thy will ... I see my past folly. O help me to glorify thee more perfectly. Amen."

We shall now introduce extracts from his diary running through several months.

"Nov. 1st. -- This day has been one of much reflection, and serious meditation, Oh! I discover dark spots in myself, and am fully prepared, by God's blessing, to amend. O Lord, be pleased to let light shine upon me, more and more. 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' Oh! may I not forget thee. May I make some entry of thy goodness and lovingkindness daily. Thou art good to so poor a worm. Lord pity me -- humble me, and keep me in the dust at thy feet."

[I doubt that what John Wesley Childs below confesses to be "sin" was indeed so. It seems more likely to me that it was either nothing more than an infirmity, a shortcoming, or perhaps it was a satanic accusation. -- DVM]

"Nov. 2d. -- This day my soul is following hard after God; though not yet in possession of the fullness. Oh! my God, when wilt thou come and bless me. I long for thy full salvation. How wavering is my mind! How much indisposed to bear the cross! I confess before my God that I have sinned in ceasing to walk and preach. Oh! what a fat portion did my soul find in [taking up that cross.] Thou wilt yet accept my poor services in that way, I will return to it as soon as the way shall be open. I know it is grievous to flesh and blood. The cross is heavy; but what of that? Did not Jesus bear it before me; and shall I not count it an honor to tread in his footsteps? Lord, strengthen me for the conflict, that I may endure as seeing him who is invisible. O enlarge my heart -- enlighten my mind, and give me a sound understanding, that I may do thy will on earth as angels do in heaven."

"Nov. 6th. -- My soul has wrestled with God this morning, and with his blessing I am resolved to persevere. Oh! when shall my soul triumphant prove. I confess before thee my foolishness, and am conscious of my unfaithfulness. It is of his great mercy that I am not consumed. Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved. Do thou teach me to do thy will more perfectly, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Help me to be firm to my purpose, and fixed in my determinations."

"Night. -- This day my soul has been in some measure stayed on God. I nearly live in the victory of the grace of the Gospel. Oh! when shall I enjoy the fullness. Lord, hasten the hour when all within shall feel thy power. I long to be swallowed up in love. 'Jesus, thou source of all my joys,' help me mightily by thy Spirit. With thee I stand; without thee I fall: Do thou teach me to be more than ever circumspect. Oh! that all thy life maybe manifest in my daily conduct. Save me from a disposition to cease, -- rather let me pity."

"Nov. 7th. -- Rose at four o'clock -- prayed and read the Scriptures till near six. My soul enjoys some life; but not a fullness. O! why are thy chariot wheels so long in coming? The cause surely exists in me. My purpose, I think, is unshaken to do the will of God my heavenly father."

"Nov. 8th. -- Rose this morning at four. Loitered an hour in dressing, shaving, and making a fire, (all badges of the fall.) Prayed and read the Scriptures till six. Found some liberty in prayer. The word of God peculiarly precious to me; my soul feasts upon it. Oh! for grace to watch and pray this day. I feel an increasing desire after holiness, and a firmer resolution literally to forsake all, and follow Christ. To walk and preach seems to be the point I must come to, if I would be happy on earth, or in heaven. Lord, give me grace and courage -- strength of body and of mind."

Can any one read these transcripts from his heart, and question the honesty and conscientiousness of the man? What a constant conflict there seems to have been going on in his mind at this time! We shall introduce a correspondence, at the close of this chapter, which will explain, in part, the severity of the contest just at this time. It will be seen that he was negotiating a matter in which difficulties were raised on the ground of his walking and preaching; and thus we may account for the subjects pressing so heavily upon his mind, at the time the above entries were made.

"Nov. 11th -- Rose at four -- found some liberty in prayer. The presence of the Lord was greatly felt. I am sensible of my shortcomings. By Divine grace I am resolved to try and do better. Lord, humble me in the dust, and give me wisdom and prudence. Make me holy in heart and life, and all manner of conversation.

"Keep me dead to all below,  
Only Christ resolved to know;  
Firm and disengaged and free,  
Seeking all my life in thee."

"Nov. 12th -- Oh, my God, thy goodness has been astonishing! Why is not my cold heart lost in wonder, love, and praise! I feel unworthy, and deserve not the crumbs that fall from the master's table. Yet, satisfy my soul with thy Spirit. My former guilt and unworthiness stare me in the face; but the great mercy in Christ encourages me still to apply for grace and salvation. Oh for power always to pray, and preserve a collected mind. May thy presence accompany me through this day."

There is a peculiarity in Mr. Childs' journal that we have not met with, to the same extent, in that of any other man. We allude to the fact that he seems to have conversed with God. He was always in a frame of devotion; and so constantly did he commune with God, that he seemed, when writing, to talk with him. Anyone who reads his diary must be struck with this peculiarity. Indeed, we find it necessary, in making extracts, frequently to insert the name of the Deity in order to supply the ellipsis, [ellipsis n. (also ellipse) (pl. ellipses) 1 the omission from a sentence of words needed to complete the construction or sense. 2 the omission of a sentence at the end of a paragraph. 3 a set of three dots etc. indicating an omission] growing out of this peculiarity, so as to make it intelligible to the reader.

The following letter, addressed to the Rev. R. G. Bass, contains several things bearing upon the points which have been brought to notice in the above extracts, and we have chosen to introduce it in this place.

Yadkin District, Nov. 4th, 1833

Dear Brother Bass:-- Your letter was received, and I was pleased to hear that you were doing well, and still resolved to pursue the strait gate and narrow way. This, and this alone is the sure way to heaven; and though we may have some difficulties, for a time, yet God will deliver us from every evil work, and preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom. Let us then, my brother, be



willing to suffer with our Lord here, that we may reign with him hereafter. Now is the time for you to show yourself a man for God. Not indeed in the estimation of the carnally-minded, but in the view of our Father -- the angels -- the holy Scriptures -- and even our own consciences. Let us live so as to maintain peace within, and then no weapon formed against us shall prosper. Let us look steadily at what is our duty, and leave the consequences to God, and all shall be well.

I would advise you never to give up the glorious strife. Do not sink down into a state of Laodicean formality. Do not be content to go on as the current is moving. Up, my brother, and struggle against it with all your power. God will help you -- he will give you the victory. Even now he is waiting to work with you, and in you, "to will and to do of his own good pleasure." How many slumbering virgins there are that lack oil in their lamps! May God help you and myself to keep ours trimmed and brightly burning.

There is no time for delay. I now heartily wish I had kept to my feet when on them. I am fully persuaded it would have been far better for me. I see no other way for me to escape the corruptions of the world, and my own nature; and even then nothing can be done but by simple and lively faith in the Lord Jesus. But unless we do what we can -- even to the utmost, God will not give that faith. Let us contend for it earnestly, my brother, and God will give it richly and fully. To this end I would advise you to be up at four o'clock in the morning. Pray, read, write, and pray again, and He will meet you, in blessings, and prepare you for every good word and work.

God has dealt very kindly with me -- one of the most ungrateful of his creatures. It is because he is God, and not man, that I have not been cut off, and that forever. He deigns in some degree to visit me, and has not given me over unto death. My soul still follows hard after him, and nothing short of the full salvation shall satisfy me. Oh! when shall the welcome day arrive that "plants my God in me."

We have had some refreshing showers of grace on this district; yet, comparatively, the waters run shallow. There are some, however, genuine souls. But who lives up to the rules laid down in the Discipline? They are wholesome, and can scarcely be bettered. How we should thank God that these are not laid aside ... Fear not man. Christ positively commands us not to fear. Be not rash in any thing. Weigh everything by reason and the Word of God.

Affectionately, your brother in Christ,  
John W. Childs

The foregoing letter contains some things that will strike the mind of the reader as being a little strange. But it is of a piece with almost every thing he wrote at this time of his life; and it is our design to furnish a faithful record of his history, as supplied by his own hand, rather than to give our own impressions of the man, or to draw a mere fancy sketch of him. We leave the reader to draw his own conclusions, and to make up his own estimate of the character which we thus present.

We return to his diary again.

"Nov. 13th. -- Rose at four. Prayed and read my Bible more than an hour. My soul still follows hard after God. Thou alone art able to do the mighty work of creating my soul anew in Christ Jesus. I bless thee for my being and all the blessings connected therewith."

"Nov. 14th. -- This morning rose after four. O, my God, vouchsafe to keep my heart and mind stayed on thee. Save me from the motions of pride -- deliver me from all appearance of evil. Let the knowledge of thyself be extended through my instrumentality."

In our future extracts from his diary, we shall omit, generally, the first line, which is almost always in the same words, namely "Rose at four," or "about four. Prayed and read till six." This was his uniform practice, and the entry was made accordingly. Sometimes he rose a little later, but he always notes it with some expression of self-reproof. He seems to have made it a matter of conscience, as he did everything else, to rise at four o'clock in the morning; and spend near two hours in his devotions. First praying, then reading his Bible, then writing in his diary, then praying again. And inasmuch as he was so regular in this, we shall omit the entries which relate to it, unless for some special reason. Indeed, we shall omit many of the daily entries entire, as they are often very nearly in the same words, and are short prayers for grace, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit: more properly, they are little conversations with God. His heart seems to have talked with God, and he noted down his part of the conversation. This is the best idea we can give of the entries in his diary.

"Nov. 15th. -- My heart, I fear, is not following as steadily after God as his word requires. O, show me the hidden cause. Grant me grace to put it away, be it ever so dear."

"Nov. 18th. -- My soul earnestly desires to be filled with the fullness of God. My heart pants for the inestimable blessing. 'Oh! when shall my soul triumphant prove?' Why breaks not out the fire within? I enjoy a good measure of love, joy, and peace; but I want the witness that my heart is entirely sanctified. Lord, I believe I enjoyed it several months last year.\*

[\*John Wesley Childs seems to have depended too much on his own works and merit for obtaining and retaining the experience of entire sanctification, though he was probably not aware of such misdirection of his faith. Indeed, his entire faith for salvation seems to have been too much in his own deeds. Thus, his constant confession of having sinned, left God, or backslidden, when it is questionable that he had even come close to doing anything like abandoning God, backsliding, or that could properly be laid to his charge as a sin against God. While this biography impresses me of the depth of his piety, it also impresses me that he was hyper-conscientious, and lived entirely too much in the realm of self-condemnation. -- DVM]

'Oh! why did I my Saviour leave,  
So soon unfaithful prove?'

Do thou pity me in my low estate, and reclaim my falling footsteps. 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free spirit?'

"Nov. 19th -- My mind somewhat serene. Found more liberty in prayer than usual. See clearly my own deficiencies. Oh! God, what a wonder that thine anger has not waxed hot against

me, and sent me down quick into hell. 'O spare me that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more seen.'

'I ask not life, but let me love.'

I seriously promise in the name of Jesus to try to do better."

"Nov. 20th. -- Thou Giver of all blessings, I bless thee for the desire I retain to serve thee. Increase in me this disposition, and help me to show forth thy praise by being much more faithful."

"Nov. 21st. -- Lord, I feel very weak; thou art my wisdom and righteousness. O diffuse thine image through my soul. I ask, desire, and trust in thee to be cleansed from all sin."

"Nov. 22d. -- Oh! I pant for God -- the living God. When shall I come and appear before him! I confess my folly -- lament my backslidings, and spread all my wants and woes before my heavenly Father. Do thou forgive and heal me. Save me for thy mercies' sake."

'I cannot rest till pure within  
Till I am wholly lost in thee.'

Take care of me this day, and suffer me to run into no sin or danger. Amen. Save me, Lord Jesus."

"Nov. 23d. -- This morning rose before four. Prayed and read my Bible more than an hour. Examined the 27th chapter of Matthew with references. My soul received much light, and I trust strength. O Lord, strengthen me most gloriously, and prepare me for the great work of saving souls. My unfaithfulness makes me ashamed; but I rejoice that I have an advocate with the Father."

"Nov. 24th. -- Had some drawings of the Spirit, but not enough. O, my God, strengthen me in the way thou wouldst have me go. Suffer not my feet to slide. Do thou help me mightily this Sabbath day."

"Nov. 25th. -- Prayed and read my Bible more than an hour. Found not so much life as I desire -- think I know the cause. O God, I have solemnly dedicated my soul, body, and spirit to thee and to thy service. Wilt thou accept my feeble offering? Oh I let the name of Jesus be more precious to me every day and hour that I live. 'Let thy goodness like a fetter' bind my watchful and thankful heart to thee."

"Nov. 26th. -- O my God, I praise thee for bringing me safely to this place. Be pleased to bless me with thy special presence. Give me more grace, especially humility."

"Nov. 27th. -- I fear I am deficient in Christian charity. O, thou Author of my salvation, save me from every spirit and temper contrary to that which was in thee. Save me especially from bigotry -- from supposing we are the people, and all others come short. May the Lord give me a large and liberal soul. Thou King of Glory, give it to me now, while I write. I pray thee, give me

the true wisdom in this matter, and save me for thy mercies' sake. May my soul in thy sight be even as a weaned child. Holy Ghost, come upon me this morning!"

"Nov. 28th. -- Feel myself dull and heavy -- know the cause. Do not govern my appetite properly. Oh! when shall I -- I who have had occasion so often to lecture others on this subject -- live according to wisdom and truth. Lord Jesus, save me or I perish. I know it is thy will; Oh! when shall it be. Save me now; and to God only shall be all the glory, through Jesus Christ, Amen."

We pass over to December 3d. "Read a chapter or two with notes. Felt some life, but oh how far beneath my privileges do I fall. Lord, help me to be more prompt in rising in the morning. Help me to be more watchful during the day. Let my light shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day."

"Dec. 4th. -- I see my path is beset with dangers, snares, and death. O Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee? I am weak, and like Peter have denied thee in days past -- negatively if not positively. I feel that I cannot encounter the difficulties ahead, unless thou dost greatly strengthen me. Oh! do it for thy glory and thy great name's sake. Amen."

"Dec. 6th -- Found peace and comfort, and a blessed prospect of doing the will of God more perfectly --

'Already springing hope I feel,  
God will destroy the power of hell.'

O my God, wash me in thy precious blood, and make my heart steadfast in thy covenant --

'Give me Thyself, from every boast,  
From every wish set free' --

but to glorify thee on earth, and find my way to heaven. I commit my soul, body, and spirit to thee -- vouchsafe to accept my sacrifice."

"Dec. 7th. -- Yesterday was fast day. Oh! how near the throne did my heavenly Father admit me. My multiplied sins\* and grievous backslidings I confess with shame. Oh! do thou cast them all behind thy back."

[\*Again, it impresses me that John Wesley Childs was probably labeling things as sins that did not even come close to so being. Thus, his repeated confessions of sin sound more like those of a Calvinist than those of a Wesleyan/Arminian. But, the trouble likely was in his identifying things as sin that actually were not such at all, but merely human shortcomings or apparent shortcomings from having set for himself such high and extremely unrealistic goals that he could not achieve them in an earthly body. And, it appears to me that the continual struggles he brought upon himself by setting unattainable standards of behavior hindered, rather than helped, him in his usefulness as a minister. -- DVM]

"Dec. 8th. -- Sunday morning. -- At Colonel Jones'. Oh Lord! I bless thee through Jesus for thy great goodness. Lately I have been laboring under unusual bodily weakness. Since last Thursday have taken no animal food, and find myself much improved in feelings, and, I think, in health. Lord, lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies. O strengthen me in body and soul to do the great work I have taken in hand -- to be a witness for Jesus."

"Dec. 9th. -- Felt more life than usual -- feel that God is drawing nearer to me continually. For several days, have enjoyed uncommon peace and tranquillity both of body and mind. 'O Lord, I will praise thee; for though thou wast angry with me, (in some degree,) thine anger is turned away and thou dost comfort me.' Help me to persevere in a course of well doing. Soon, I know, all temporal things will change and fade. Oh! let me not be deceived by the temptations that may befall me; but grant me grace to be all eye all ear, all expectation in reference to the coming foe, that I be not surprised into any known sin. Thou hast mercifully preserved me for a length of time, even from my besetting sin. O Holy Father, canst thou not preserve me to the end? I ask for all in and through Jesus Christ. Amen and Amen."

"Dec. 11th. -- Surely God has come unusually near me, and in me. Yesterday was a high day to my soul. Oh! what blessings did my heavenly Father communicate. I can scarcely tell the time when I felt so well both in soul and body. I trust he gave a blessing to the people also. He is surely willing to communicate still more of his grace. Indeed, for several days, he has been greatly blessing me, so that I have been ready to make Jacob's promise, 'If the Lord will be with me, and keep me in the way that I go,' &c. O my Saviour, help me, and help me mightily, and grant me grace to lay out all my health and strength for thee. Even so, Lord Jesus, thy will be done."

"Dec. 12th. -- Preached at Rock Spring, from Isaiah xlii. 18-19. Spoke some strong words, especially against brandy-makers."

"Dec. 14th. -- Saturday morning. -- Rose at four. Prayed and read my Bible for near two hours; found some life, and, I hope, strength. I have eaten no animal food for more than a week, and think my health improved by it -- at any rate, I feel much more free and easy both in body and soul. 'O Lord, revive thy work,' bless my charge, and save the souls of the people. Oh! let me never be as salt that has lost its savor. I here devote myself anew to thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Accept my offering, and make my body a temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. O Lord, hear; and when thou hearest, forgive; and come down and dwell with a worm from henceforth. Amen: even so come, Lord Jesus."

"Dec. 15th. Sunday morning ... This Lord's day I consecrate my soul, body, and spirit to thy service. Vouchsafe to release me from all my sins, and give me the inward kingdom here, and glory hereafter."

"Dec. 17th. -- My resolution to be wholly the Lord's is strengthened. Oh! may the covenant blood be applied that takes my sins away. Lord, make me thy beloved, and let me dwell safely under the shadow of thy wings. I want more purity."

"Dec. 18th. -- Felt the Lord near and precious. Go with me this day to my appointment, and commune with my heart by the way. Lord, give a blessing to this family."

He was, at the time of the last entry, at James Campbell's in Iredell county, N. C. Mr. Campbell was one of Mr. Childs' devoted friends -- an intelligent Christian gentleman, and a most judicious counselor in church matters. He has been dead for several years; but his memory lives, and his influence is still felt. From Mr. Campbell's, Mr. Childs rode to Salisbury, and stopped with his devoted friend Mr. Palmer, at whose house he almost always lodged when in that place. Here he writes --

"Dec. 19th. -- Felt sweet peace, but want a greater fullness. Preached last night, in this place, to a few people, with some liberty; and, I trust, some good was done. Lord, save the inhabitants of Salisbury, I cannot forbear recording, this morning, the goodness of God to my soul. For some time my soul has been almost continually living in the victory of the grace of God.

'Oh, how shall words, with equal warmth,  
My gratitude declare,  
That glows within my ravished soul,  
But Thou canst read it there.'

'I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.' 'Keep me, keep me, gracious Lord, and never let me go.'"

"Lexington, Dec. 20th. -- At Mr. McRorie's. Felt the presence of the Lord in some good degree, though not as clearly and sensibly as for some days past. Yet, I think I know the cause. O Lord, help me to be more watchful in the article of food. Grant me grace to use only that quality and quantity that is best for me. My soul in some degree dwells in the victory of the grace of God. Preached last night in this place. The Lord in great mercy gave me forcible words, for which I am thankful. Oh! that they may not fall to the ground. O Lord, save the inhabitants of this village."

[The above sounds to me like one who was in such personal, legalistic bondage that he feared taking one too many bites of food, lest it become to him a sin. While Childs' desire for deep, personal piety were altogether commendable, his extreme rigors and fears seemed to keep him too much in a state of inward anxiety, instead of a quiet and confident repose in God. -- DVM]

Mr. McRorie, with whom Mr. Childs uniformly lodged in Lexington, was a pious Presbyterian gentleman. He was devotedly attached to Mr. Childs, and would not allow him to call any other place his home in the village.

We next find him at Midway, in Davidson county, where he writes:-- "Dec. 21st. -- Yesterday we dedicated Midway chapel to the service of the Triune God. My subject (Isaiah, 56th chap., 7th verse) was new, and my thoughts were quite scattering; but, toward the last, the Lord poured his Spirit upon us, and we had a gracious time indeed. O Lord, make thyself known during this quarterly-meeting."

"Dec. 22d. -- I have enjoyed much peace for the last two weeks, for which I thank God through Jesus Christ.

'Still hold my soul in second life,  
Till I thy glory see;  
Until the sprinkling of thy blood,  
Shall speak me up to thee!'"

"Dec. 23d. -- Yesterday my soul was in a state of severe trial. O Lord, I throw myself upon thy mercy in Christ Jesus. Keep me this day."

The next day we find him again with his friend and brother, Mr. McRorie, in Lexington, where he writes: "Dec. 24th. -- Felt some comfort and life. but how far short do I come of my covenant engagements with my God! How much am I a slave yet to the opinions, fashions, and customs of men! How much want of that real love to my neighbor as to myself! Oh my God! is not the want of perfect love to thee the true cause of this deficiency? I see it -- I feel it; and by the grace of God I purpose to amend my ways and my doings. Oh Jesus! suffer me not to fall from my steadfastness; but do thou make me more and more unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord! Preached last night in this place in one of the jury rooms in the court-house to a few persons. Had some life and liberty; but oh! I fear I am yet preaching myself instead of Christ. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, preserve me, a worm of the earth."

"Wednesday morning, Christmas Day, Dec. 25th -- At Bro. D. Mock's. Rose near six! Strange that I should oversleep myself! An unusual dullness -- sluggishness -- think I know the cause. Lord, I kiss the rod, and adore the hand that sent it, though for the present it be not joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterwards it shall yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Grant me grace to be properly exercised."

"Dec. 26th. -- Enjoyed a calm serenity of mind; yet oh! my Lord, I want power to watch unto prayer. Help me to live through this day, and through succeeding days to the glory of thy name."

"Dec. 27th. -- My purpose remains unshaken to do the will of my heavenly Father. O Lord, who am I that thou shouldst condescend to take knowledge of me."

"Ashborough, Dec. 28th. -- At Col. Elliott's. Found a degree of peace, but fear I do not 'hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Lord, stir me up to double my diligence. When shall a crucifixion of the flesh, an entire crucifixion, be obtained? Oh! hasten the joyful day. Lord, speedily accomplish the work with power. I am thine, save me for Jesus' sake."

"Dec. 28th. -- Still at Col. Elliott's. Sunday morning. Enjoy more apparent health of body and peace of mind than usual; but oh! I am not zealous enough, do not 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' sufficiently. Lord, save me from all my besetments, and give me grace to watch unto prayer continually. Oh! assist me to love thy law. May it be better to me than thousands of gold and silver. This day be with me in my public ministrations, and may I worthily partake of the broken body and spilt blood of my Saviour. Aid me in every thing, that thy name may be glorified, and the souls of the people edified and saved."

"Dec. 30th -- Still at Col. Elliott's. (A kind family.) Slept about six hours during the night. Found indescribable peace in my devotions. Oh! what comfort and happiness should I lose were sleep to overcome me. O Lord, help me to live regularly and religiously before thee.

"Yesterday was a day of uncommon comfort to my soul. The Lord enabled me to preach to the large congregation that attended, to edification and comfort, I trust. O, my heavenly Father, seal instruction on many hearts. Oh! give me the preparation of soul requisite for the faithful performance of my pastoral duties. Come, Lord Jesus, into my heart -- into my labors, and in thine own good time take me away from a world of tribulation and trial. Thou art mine, and with confidence I call thee Father. What shall I do to praise thee --

'Praise to Thee, eternal merit,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.'

"Dec. 30th, 1833 -- Same place still. Felt peace in my soul in my morning devotions. I trust the people of Ashborough are solemnly impressed with the subject of religion. All seem to be kind; but, Lord, thou knowest how long this will last. I commit my way to thee."

We next find him in Guilford county, at the house of a kind Christian brother, where on the 1st of January, 1834, he writes as follows: "Rose a little after three. My soul in some degree stayed upon God. 'My soul followeth hard after God, and his right hand upholdeth me.' I desire, this morning, to give myself anew to thee. O accept of my poor sacrifice, and do thou condescend to preserve me from all sin, and make me a vessel unto honor, fitted for the master's use. O give me more of the mind that was in Christ Jesus; and may my 'adorning' be the inward adorning 'of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.'"

"Greensborough, Jan. 2d, 1834 -- Rose at quarter after three; felt calm and peaceful. Prayed and read my Bible, after which I talked a little too much; felt a momentary check; but oh! how soon pardoning love takes place. O Lord take me into closer union with thyself. I am vile, and helpless, and miserable without thee. Give me the humility of the Gospel, and aid in all my attempts to do good in thy name. I want more grace, more love, zeal, and profound humility."

"Jan. 3d, Friday morning. -- At Bro. Edwards'. Rose before five. Prayed and read my Bible nearly two hours or quite. Felt the presence of our heavenly Father in a good degree. O my God, I praise thee for what thou hast and dost impart; but this cannot suffice. I still look for more. Pity my unwatchfulness, and give me perfect love. Swallow up my soul in love --

'Oh love! thou bottomless abyss.'

I this morning reconsecrate my soul, body, and spirit to thee: all I have, all I am. Oh! take me -- seal me for thine own, and

'Thine shall be the glory,  
Man's the boundless bliss.'

Come Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and reign in me:



'No longer from thy creature stay,  
My author and my end.'

Thy service is perfect freedom. O my Father, evermore give me this bread from heaven."

From the date of the last entry, the author was in company with Mr. Childs for several days following, and was the witness of his extraordinary devotions. We rode nearly thirty miles on the 3d of January; and it was, perhaps, one of the coldest days of that winter. It was Mr. Childs' fast, for he fasted every Friday; and with the exception of a little bread and cheese, which he took about three o'clock in the afternoon, he ate nothing till nearly eight o'clock in the evening. We had gone about nine miles on our journey, when we came to a little village in which Mr. Childs had several acquaintances. He rode up to the door of their houses and inquired after the health of the inmates; and finding a member of one of the families ill, he dismounted and went in, and after a little conversation, he proposed prayer, according to his usual custom, and then he importuned, and plead with God for the recovery of his friend. He left the family and friends all in tears, and proceeded on his journey.

Just at nightfall we stopped at a house of private entertainment, and took lodgings for the night. It was extremely cold. The room to which we were assigned was for some time without fire; but Mr. Childs, true to his devotions, was engaged in private prayer for some time before supper was announced. There was a good deal of company in the house; and there were some who were a little frolicsome and full of life, who kept up a good deal of noise and mirth below stairs. This annoyed Mr. Childs very much: for the house was kept by a Methodist. Supper was late; Mr. Childs was wearied with the day's travel through the cold; and the boisterous conversation, loud laughing, and constant bustle seemed, momentarily, to disturb the equanimity of his spirit. And after praying earnestly for awhile, he went down to the foot of the stairway in the passage, and asked a servant to request the lady of the house to come to him. She did so; and he, in the most gentle and affectionate manner, remonstrated with her, as a Christian, for permitting such behavior under her roof. It was but a few moments before everything was quiet, and he was no more disturbed in his devotions. The next morning he made the following entry in his diary: -- "Jan. 4th. -- Rose before six. Prayed and read my Bible about an hour. Dull -- some life toward the last. How much true religion is wanted here! O Lord, open their eyes, and open the eyes of all our preachers, that we may not rest till there be no room left for error in doctrine, and viciousness in life."

It is not too much to intimate that the dullness of which he here complains was the result of physical and not moral causes. Mr. Childs had been exposed to the cold the previous day, through a fatiguing ride. He had fasted the whole day. He did not get to bed as early as usual, and his rest was broken. It is to be apprehended that Christians often write bitter things against themselves, and complain of coldness and want of zeal in religion, and even accuse themselves of backsliding, when the whole is attributable to physical causes, and not to be ascribed to any neglect of duty or moral delinquency whatever. Mr. Childs, we dare believe, often condemned himself for a want of more spiritual life, and for apathy in his devotions, when the fact is, he was so exhausted, physically, that he could not rise above the languor consequent on such exhaustion. But to return:--

"Lexington, Jan. 5th -- At friend McRorie's ... Through grace was, in a degree, melted. Lord soften my heart yet more and more. I have come short of thy glory. O save me for thy mercies' sake. O keep me as the apple of thine eye. Hide me in the secret of thy pavilion. Is it so that I am engaged to change my relation in life? My God, I thank thee -- I receive her as from thee; thou knowest that in some respects I have been submissive. I had given up all expectation, and now receive her as immediately from thee. Lord Jesus, make us faithful. O bless us, and bless us abundantly."

The reader will find an explanation of some of the matters alluded to above, in the correspondence between Mr. Childs and Miss Rives, a part of which we shall presently submit to inspection. It will be seen that he conducted his whole correspondence on the subject of matrimony, with the same conscientiousness and submission to God that he did everything else of his life. It will be seen that he was willing sooner to give up the dearest object of his love, than to surrender one solitary point in which his conscience, as an itinerant minister, was involved. But we must not anticipate.

He remained for several days with his "friend McRorie," as he calls him, in Lexington. The weather was still intensely cold, and he could not be out much in visiting from house to house. He writes --

"Jan. 6th -- Prayed and read -- found some sweetness at last; but there has been a cloud hanging over me for a day or two. Lord, thou knowest the cause. Whatever obstructs thy pardoning love, remove, thy glory to display. See me -- know the way that I take -- preserve my life from the fear of the enemy."

The author remembers distinctly a conversation with Mr. Childs on the day of the entry just quoted, in relation to the cloud which had for a day or two been hanging over him. He is remembered to have stated that he thought he had discovered the cause of his darkness; and then went on to assign the following as the most probable. Said he, "When in Greensborough, the other day, I purchased a new suit of clothes, for which I paid four and a half dollars per yard." (I think that was the price.) "I might have got a good, substantial cassinet, at considerably less, and thus I could have saved a few dollars to give to the poor. The latter article would have been just as comfortable, and would have done me equal service, and I might, in the meanwhile, have had something to relieve the necessities of the destitute and suffering." He seemed really to think that this was the cause of the cloud that had obscured the sun of righteousness. He added, "If God will pardon me in this instance, I will, by his grace assisting me, do so no more." And so far as we know or believe, he never gave even four and a half dollars for cloth to wear himself, till the day of his death. We refrain from any comment on those facts, preferring to leave them with the reader to draw his own conclusions and make his own improvements.

"Jan. 7th. -- The weather extremely cold. Lord, I confess my sin and shame unto thee. Do thou bless me for the sake of Jesus, and pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. Oh! I have not loved my neighbor as myself; assist me in this matter, for the time to come."

"Jan. 8th -- ... O Lord, forgive me all that thou hast seen amiss in my spirit, conversation, or actions. O Lord, thou knowest the trial that awaits me; stand by me and help me through it. Be

pleased to hear me when I call upon thee, and if I should be so stupid as to forget thee, Lord, stir me up and remind me of my duty."

"Jan. 9th. -- Found not so much peace as usual in my devotions. Think I know the cause -- have indulged my fleshly appetite too much. Oh! when shall I be temperate in all things -- especially in food."

"Jamestown, Guilford, N. C., Jan. 10th, 1884 ... My soul pants after more. Yesterday, upon the whole, was a day of peace and comfort to my soul; though, after lying down, my sleep was a little disturbed, I think, by supernatural influence. O Lord, hast thou not promised that thine angels shall encamp round about them that fear thee, to deliver them. O do thou give them charge over me, and save me and mine from the seductions of the devil. Preserve my mind in perfect peace, and perfect me in love, and save me from sinking down again to the earth."

"Jan. 11th -- The Lord has given me a good degree of comfort; but I want a sanctified spirit. Grant me the blessing of a clean heart. "This morning I consecrate all I have and am afresh to thy service. I know Thou art with me, but oh, do Thou fill me with the fullness of God."

"Greensborough, Jan. 12th. -- My mind wandering -- think I know the cause. Oh! how do outward things ensnare my soul. My God, crucify me to this poor world more and more. Lord, help me to remember the poor, in all my movements, when I go to purchase necessary clothing. Oh! help me to study how much may be saved to give to the poor and needy. Father, I ask this through Jesus; for I know, if left to myself, I shall follow a multitude to do evil. I shall 'hide myself from my own flesh.' Be pleased to forgive me what is past in this matter. Let 'the time past suffice,' in this respect, 'to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.' Lord Jesus, blot out all my past follies, and give me grace and strength for time to come. I would this morning devote myself anew to thy service.

"Oh! what freedom do I find in my bodily health to what I formerly felt. O Jesus, humble me, and give me grace to improve every faculty of my soul and body to thy glory."

It will be remembered that the purchase of a suit of clothes, referred to at a previous date, had given him a good deal of trouble, and greatly interfered with his spiritual enjoyments. He made this purchase in Greensborough; and at the date of the entry above, he had returned to get them from his tailor; and again, we find he alludes to the subject as a source of self-reproach. And yet this was an exceedingly plain and cheap suit of clothes. The entire suit was a plain, dark drab, and was made up in the old-fashioned Methodist style. Indeed, it was more of the Quaker order; and yet he feared he had expended too much money in this purchase. And how devoutly does he beseech his heavenly Father to help him to remember the poor in the future, when he shall make purchases of wearing-apparel! How few Christians among us, who can adopt the petition, "Oh! help me to study how much may be saved to give to the poor and needy, when I go to purchase necessary clothing!"

"Jan. 13th. -- Yesterday, in the early part of the day, was a season of prosperity; but fear my spirit was a little elated. O Jesus, keep me from the least approach that way. Hide pride from me; or, rather, hide me from pride of every sort that is offensive in thy sight. Forgive, if I have indulged the accursed thing in any degree ... Come, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- take possession of thy temple, and stretch out the wings of the cherubim over me."

"Jan. 14th. -- Rose at five -- spent too much time in fixing. Lord, forgive me."

"Jan. 15th. -- My mind in a state of peace and tranquillity, but not yet a fullness. O my God! whatever obstructs, let it obstruct in vain. Let me live continually in the victory of the grace of God ... O Jesus, let thy name be honored by me, through me, and in me. Save me from a wandering mind."

"Jan. 17th -- Rose after three -- prayed and read my Bible for more than an hour. Lord, do I waste any time in this respect? If thou seest that I do, oh! convince me of it. If thou wouldst have me prompt to an hour, be pleased to let thy Spirit lead me in this and every other way thou wouldst have me go. Oh! make my conscience quick as the apple of an eye. Jesus, lead me in a plain path, and help me to bring forth more fruit. Oh! purge me -- thou dost, and I am thankful. Upon me lay thy mighty hand of grace -- my thoughts, words, and actions restrain, that all may be a sacrifice acceptable to thee, and to thy Father, through thy Holy Spirit. Even so, Lord Jesus."

"Jan. 18th -- Felt sweet peace and heavenly consolation in my morning devotions. O God, I will praise thee for what thou hast done for me. Perfect thy work within me, and make me more and more holy."

"Jan. 19th -- Prayed and read my Bible with references, for near two hours. My soul calmly resting upon God. Oh! what has my heavenly Father done for me lately. Surely he has deepened his work in my soul; and though I do not know that I have obtained the fullness of the purchased possession, yet my soul well-nigh lives in the victory of the grace of God, calmly and sweetly resting in the arms of Jesus. O my blessed Saviour, refine me yet more and more, that through thy name I may bear more fruit. This day deign to go with me, and preserve me from the machinations of the devil. Let my soul sit at thy feet and listen to heavenly instruction."

"Jan. 20th -- Rose at half-past three. Feel sweet peace in my soul -- am looking up for larger measures of grace and mercy. O my God, I humbly thank thee for the degree that I enjoy; but let me not rest satisfied with this, but rather with unwearied delight let me 'press to the mark for the prize of my high calling of God in Christ Jesus' ... I thank thee for giving me to speak thy word, yesterday, with a degree of power. Lord, save me and the dear people for whom Christ died. Oh! let not thy word return void. Thou alone canst help me, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Mr. Childs had finished his work for the Conference year, and we shall next find him on his way to Lynchburg, Virginia, whither he was going to visit his friends, intending also to make a trip to Richmond, and a tour of visitation among his old acquaintances in the intervening portions of the state, where he had formerly traveled and labored, before going up to the Conference, which was to be held at Raleigh, North Carolina, in the month of February.

From the last entries it will be seen that he had almost, if not entirely regained the state of grace in which he had been while on the Buckingham circuit. He says -- "I do not know that I have obtained the fullness of the purchased possession, yet my soul well-nigh lives in the victory of the grace of God." He was in an exalted state of Christian enjoyment. He lived in constant communion with God. His peace was like a river -- ever flowing, deepening, widening, and spreading out

toward the great ocean of eternal love. In reviewing his year's labors, he had occasion to thank God and take courage. He had gone through sore trials of his faith and severe buffetings of the devil, and yet amid all he had held on his way and made progress in the Divine life.

The last two weeks preceding his departure from the district, he spent among his Christian brethren and friends on the Guilford circuit.

On the 21st of January he started for Lynchburg; and on the morning of the 22d, he makes the following entry, at Brother Field's:-- "Yesterday on the road, my soul was again and again watered and fed. O my Lord, keep me near thy bleeding side. One thing, however, yesterday, I omitted to do. Lord, forgive me. Calling at a house to warm, the master I found to be 'wise in his own conceit,' and I did not propose prayer before leaving. Help me, O Lord, to be always about my Master's business, that no day may be spent without making an effort to do good in thy name.

"Be pleased to keep me this day -- prosper on my journey -- preserve me from accident and danger, and may thy grace shine upon my heart. Oh! if it be thy will, give me good weather -- thy will be done."

"Jan. 23d -- Pittsylvania Court-house. Rose at four. Prayed and read my Bible more than an hour. Felt a degree of peace, but not a fullness. Lord, give me all my soul requires."

"Jan. 24th -- At Brother Henry Moorman's. The Lord graciously favored me with his presence this morning. O God, still continue thy lovingkindness to an unworthy worm, and bless me in my intercourse with my fellow-creatures. Give me, this day, spiritual life; and may 'the words of my lips and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.'"

"Lynchburg, at Brother Early's, Jan. 25th -- O my Lord, I will bless thee for what I do feel, and verily believe thou hast a larger blessing in store for me. Lead me forth this day; assist me to be firm to my purpose, and help me in my humble measure to glorify thee on earth."

The week following the last date was spent in Lynchburg. The entries in his diary are longer than usual; but they do not present sufficient variety to justify their introduction at length.

His spiritual experience continues pretty uniform, and about of the same type as that presented for the last two or three weeks. He writes --

"Jan. 26th -- I want constant power to rejoice, pray, give thanks. Attempted to speak twice in this place yesterday. Felt the Lord measurably assisted me. O Lord remove every impediment out of the way, and make me a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use."

"Jan. 27th -- Oh do thou give me rectitude of heart and rectitude of life! Give me at all times the testimony of thy Spirit that my heart is purified. In my feeble way, I attempted to preach and exhort both, yesterday: the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit I trust each time was with me."

"Jan. 28th ... Felt the Lord present with me, and feel that he has done great things for me, whereof I am glad. Though I do not yet enjoy the fullness; yet, bless the Lord, I feel my soul lies prostrate in his hand -- he will do the mighty work. Lord, give me the fullness of the purchased possession -- to me and to my intended companion -- to all, who, for full redemption wait.

"Last night I endeavored to preach again in much weakness, but trust the word was accompanied with Divine power. O Lord, let not the feeble effort be in vain; but accompany the word with the Holy Spirit."

"Jan. 29th -- I feel I am unfaithful; and, perhaps, the step I am about to take may have betrayed me into some improprieties. O thou Searcher of Hearts, search my heart! See if there be any wicked way in me. Guide me continually by thy word and Spirit."

On the 30th January, Mr. Childs left Lynchburg for the city of Richmond. January 31st he writes -- "At Sister Burge's. Yesterday was a day of comfort to my soul ... May I be useful wherever I go."

"Feb. 1st, 1834 -- At Capt. Davidson's. Feel the presence of my Maker; but long for the brighter and clearer displays of his mercy, favor, and goodness. I desire to devote myself anew to the service of God."

"At Sister Jones's, Sunday morning, Feb. 2d -- Deep snow. Not as much life as usual, though my soul feels in a good state. Help me to walk before Thee with more caution and circumspection. Oh! for the Holy Spirit to sit upon my heart as a refiner's fire and as fullers' soap, that all the dross and tin of base desire may be purged away."

"At Bro. R. Gillum's, Feb. 3d -- The Lord, in some measure, has turned my captivity; for, last night, I was burdened, fearing I had broken, or had been the occasion of others breaking the Sabbath. O my God, show me clearly what thou wouldst have me do. Did I transgress in removing yesterday? Thou knowest my design. For the sake of Jesus, forgive, and grant me an increase of grace and a truly enlightened conscience, that it may be 'quick as the apple of an eye,' the slightest touch of sin to feel. I praise thee for the comfort lately experienced both in my soul and body."

"At Bro. M. M. Langhorne's, Feb. 4th -- My mind not so comfortable as usual; but, bless the Lord, I have no reason to complain. I will triumph in the God of my salvation. Keep me this day from danger and accident, both soul and body, and may my mind be stayed on thee."

"Wednesday morning. -- At Bro. B. Bransford's. I bless Thee for what I do enjoy; for preserving grace yesterday."

"At Bro. Maxey's, Feb. 6th ... Received some comfort; fear I have had a disposition to think more highly of myself than I ought to think -- to speak as though the grace I feel were my own. O my God, save me from this and every other snare. Let no iniquity have dominion over me. I would here devote my body, spirit, will, judgment, memory, affections, all that I have and am, to thee, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

"Friday, Feb. 7th -- At Bro. Allison's, Richmond. My mind not at all in its usual frame; though, blessed be God, the tempest is in some measure calmed. Yesterday I was more severely beset than for many days before. O my Lord, if I have neglected duty, or committed sin that has been the occasion of the enemy's being let loose against me, or if it be for my further trial and purification, Lord help me to profit by it."

"Saturday, Feb. 8th -- Still in Richmond. Prayed and read my Bible for more than an hour, though dull and heavy enough. Lord Jesus, save me, or I perish. Thou wast merciful to me during the day. Oh! receive my thanks; pity and save me even to the uttermost."

Saturday, he rode from Richmond to Petersburg, where we find him writing -- "Sunday morning, Feb. 9th -- At Bro. T. Branch's. Was very dull in my morning devotions; but the Lord infused some life toward the last. O Jesus, save me, for I cannot save myself. I feel that I am bruised and mangled. I now think, indeed, I see clearly, that I wandered out of the way in coming by Richmond. The Lord seemed to point out to my mind, that through Prince Edward county was my course. [This was his more direct course from Lynchburg to Raleigh.] Oh! do thou forgive me, and grant me grace to be more attentive and obedient to the voice of thy Spirit."

"Feb. 10th. -- Still at Bro. Branch's ... O Lord, grant me the blessing of a clean heart; save me from my corruption, and hourly give me the testimony that I please thee."

"At Bro. Isam Hargrove's, Feb. 11th ... I acknowledge myself to be the most unfaithful and ungrateful; yet thou dost condescend to bear with me and to give me peace. Lord, lay not my former sins to my charge; but do thou establish with me the covenant new. Without thee, I am wretched; with thee, all is calmness, and joy, and peace. Help me that I may 'walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing,' and be filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ."

"At Bro. Doyle's, Brunswick county, Va., Feb. 12th -- Rose after five. Father, forgive my slothfulness. Prayed and read my Bible for an hour. Not the fullness of comfort that I desire. O God, help me to shake myself from the dust; help me to awake and keep awake."

"At Bro. Wilkinson's, Brunswick, Feb. 13th -- Rose after five. Father, forgive my sloth. My soul comparatively lifeless; yet thou, O Lord, canst diffuse the quickening principle. I likewise indulged in irregular quickness this morning. O my God, forgive me, and save me for the time to come, through Jesus. May I see that everything is sent, or wisely suffered, to give us an opportunity of embracing thy will. Father, thy will be done; may mine be swallowed up therein."

"At Sister Lewis', Brunswick, Feb. 14th -- [This morning he arose at his usual hour. He scarcely ever failed to rise at four.] O Lord, I will bless thee for what I do feel. Do thou satisfy me early with thy mercy, and preserve me from the snares of the wicked one."

Mr. Childs was now visiting his old friends, and on all suitable occasions he was preaching, exhorting, and praying with the people. And yet he seems not to have been in the full measure of enjoyment that he had attained unto a few weeks previous. His diary abounds with prayers for the full restoration of Divine favor, but we deem it unnecessary to copy them.

"At Bro. Mason's, Brunswick, Feb. 17th -- Rose after five. Lord, forgive my sloth. -- I acknowledge before Thee my backslidings, shortcomings, and imperfections. Do Thou throw the veil of thy mercy over all."

Sunday, Feb. 16th, he was at "Sister Harrison's."

"Feb. 17th, at Bro. James Robinson's, Greenville Circuit. My mind in rather a more peaceful and comfortable frame, which I pray the Lord may be increased abundantly."

"At Bro. Geo. W. Dey's, Warrenton, N. C., Feb. 18th. -- My mind measurably stayed on God. Oh, how great is thy goodness to me! O Lord, I confess my folly. Thou alone canst save me from sin and Satan's power."

"At Bro. King's, near Lewisburg, N. C., Feb. 19th -- Found the presence of the Lord in a measure. Accept my thanks for the blessings bestowed on me yesterday and during the night past."

"At Mrs. Wheaton's, Raleigh, Feb. 20th -- Rose after five to my shame! Prayed and read my Bible for more than an hour -- felt a degree of peace for which I feel thankful. O Lord, make me more humble, and more watchful, and more thankful. Receive my prayers this morning, and graciously make this Conference a blessing to me."

All the entries during the session of the Conference are pretty much alike, and relate almost exclusively to his personal experience, which seems not to have been as comfortable as formerly. He complains of his coldness and dullness, and offers up many prayers for an increase of spiritual joy. He seems always ready to condemn himself. Near the close of the Conference he writes thus:-- "After going to bed at twelve, rose at six. Lord, do thou forgive me."

He was reappointed to the Yadkin district, now under the name of the Salisbury district, and at the close of the session he returned immediately to Lynchburg, for the purpose of consummating his matrimonial engagement prior to his going on to his work. On his way, we find him at Randolph Macon College, on the 4th of March, 1834, at the inauguration of the Rev. Stephen Olin, as president of the institution. His impressions of this occasion will be seen presently, in a letter which he wrote, from the neighborhood of the College, to Miss Rives, to whom he was soon to be married. On the 7th of March he writes:-- "At Bro. Walker's, Mecklenburg County, Virginia," and on the 12th we find him "at Mr. Statum's," near Lynchburg, where he makes the following note:-- "Rose at five. Prayed and read my Bible for an hour. But how heartless! Lord, forgive me, and stir me up to double my diligence. Yet I thank thee for what thou hast done for me. Oh, continue thy lovingkindness to those that know thee. Be pleased this day to deliver me, and defend me, and save me. Even so, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, to seal me thine. Open thy way before me, and save me for thy name's sake."

"At Bro. Benaugh's, Lynchburg, March 13th -- Rose in the first instance before four -- returned to bed, and rose before five. Prayed and read my Bible for more than an hour, though my head was so much disordered there was very little connection. O Lord, do thou grant thy blessing upon the work of my hands, especially upon what I expect to engage in this day, namely, to be



married. Lord Jesus, I ask thy presence among us. Oh, make one in our midst at the wedding, and bless us indeed and in truth."

We shall now drop back in the progress of this biography, and introduce, in another chapter, the correspondence between Mr. Childs and Miss Rives, to which we have several times alluded, and which cannot fail to interest the reader. We do this because the letters written by Mr. Childs so strikingly exhibit his conscientiousness, his firmness under a very severe trial, and his purpose to do, what he thought to be the will of God concerning him, though it should be at the sacrifice of all that he held most dear on earth.

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## Chapter 9

### CORRESPONDENCE WITH MISS MARTHA S. RIVES -- HIS MARRIAGE

Mr. Childs' marriage, embracing the circumstances connected with it, forms an interesting and instructive chapter in his history.

In visiting the house of Rev. John Early, of Lynchburg, Mr. Childs formed the acquaintance of Miss Martha S. Rives, a sister of Mrs. Early's, and at that time an inmate of Mr. Early's family. As their acquaintance matured, and they learned more and still more of each other's habits, opinions, and dispositions, a strong Christian attachment seems to have grown up between them. Miss Rives looked upon Mr. Childs as a man of extraordinary piety; and she at first merely sought his society, and cultivated his acquaintance, for the sake of availing herself of his counsel and instruction as a spiritual guide. He, it seems, had enjoyed, and at the time of which we now speak, enjoyed the blessing of perfect love; or, what is known as sanctification or holiness, in Methodist theology. Miss Rives was an earnest seeker of this attainment in grace, and was therefore the more pleased with his society and friendship.

When he was appointed presiding elder of the Yadkin district, and was about to depart for his field of labor, which was some distance from Lynchburg, he proposed a religious correspondence, which was assented to on her part. This correspondence was confined, wholly, at first, to religious subjects; and the letters which passed between them were of a highly spiritual character. She sees not to have suspected that he entertained any design whatever of changing the character of that correspondence, by introducing any other topic, until she received a letter from him, under date June 6th, 1833, in which he frankly made a tender of his hand in matrimony.

There is something so characteristic in the letters which he wrote on this subject that, we doubt not, they will be found entertaining and instructive; and will at the same time more fully reveal the symmetry and proportions of that adamant column of conscientiousness and consistency of character which shows itself at every step we take in his life. It admits of a doubt whether any man was ever more scrupulous in making everything bend and bow to what he conceived to be his duty to his God.

Greensborough, Guilford County, N. C.  
June 6th, 1833

My Dear Sister Martha:

I sincerely pray that grace, mercy and peace may abide with you richly; and that this letter may find you, with your affections placed on things above, still pressing for the goal. I think that Christ is still the life of my soul, and that I am following hard after the full image of God. Oh help me by your prayers; for I have not attained to all that God has promised us here below. Yet, blessed be his holy name for the favors already communicated.

If I might dare to do it, I would tell you all that is in my heart. If you will allow me then, I will do so.

For months I have believed it would be better for me to change my relation in life, provided I could do so for the glory of God. I have thought, perhaps, that you knew pretty well, from my outward movements, what are my views -- I think they are the same, to lead a self-denying cross-bearing life; that I may be fully prepared for glory hereafter. If I know myself, I have no other design before me, than to trample this world under my feet -- to be dead with our Lord that I may live with him -- suffer, that I may reign. These are my purposes, and could I find some one like-minded, I believe it would be for the glory of God for me to change my relation in life. Among all that I have known, I have met with not one, save yourself, that I have reason to believe would help me forward in the glorious work. Now, if you have thought upon the subject -- if you think you can make the sacrifice -- if you think you are willing to engage, steadily, "in not seeking your own, but the things that are Jesus Christ's," -- and there be no impediment in the way, then I offer you my heart, my hand, my prayers, and every attention that Christian love, or the providence of God, may enable me to give you.

This matter I commit wholly to the Lord, and to your decision. If you say nay, I trust I shall bear it through grace, and still have a true Christian affection for you, such as will lead me to remember you several times each day at a throne of grace. If you accede to my proposals, and say yea, then I hope to be able to say with the wise man "A good \_\_\_\_\_ is from the Lord."

Perhaps the whole of the above is what you did not expect, and may give you offense ... I will add that I am quite poor, and have followed the course pursued by Mr. Wesley, in literally giving away everything over a support. And that you may not be deceived, permit me to give you a case that has occurred since I have been on this district, which I hope you will keep. Being at a place where they wanted money for building a church, and having but seven or eight dollars, five were given for that purpose. Please do not speak of this, for it would not have fallen from my pen but by way of illustration. I wish you to know all; and I wish you to make the subject a matter of prayer, and let me hear from you at as early a period as convenient. I trust my object is the glory of God, and our mutual spiritual improvement, in time and in eternity. If you have reason to think your soul would be injured by making a change, however much I love you, you ought certainly to prefer your eternal interests to temporal good. Oh, that God may give us both a right judgment in all things ... We have some good times on the district. Some have been converted! -- "but what are they among so many?" Oh pray that more and more may be added to the number. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem; "they shall prosper that love thee;" and be assured that you have a place in the affections,

Of yours, &c.,  
John W. Childs

Under date August 1st, 1833, he writes to Miss Rives in reply to a letter from her in which she favors his proposal, using the following language.

"I have endeavored to commit this whole matter to Him, 'who points the clouds their course;' and that you should so far favor me was received as an instance of goodness from our heavenly Father. I loved you much, but now I love you more. My prayer is that our affection may be as pure as the morning dew drops, -- that Jesus himself may lead us and guide us in every step that we take, and in all may we be able to say, 'Father, not my will but thine be done.'

"Since writing my last, I have again and again thought it was presumption in me to address you, considering my poverty, my many frailties and imperfections. The list, my sister, is long, but then my hope is, that love on our part will cover the multitude of my defects, should our union be consummated, which I ardently pray may be the case. Meantime, let us live in the spirit of sacrifice at the feet of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

"I think that He whose eye seeth in secret knows that my leading object in our anticipated union is, that we may take sweet counsel together, and, if possible, sink deeper into God; that we may rise to all the heights of holiness. I feel the need of such a friend. God has said 'it is not good for man to be alone.'

"When I reflect on the scantiness of means possessed by me, unbelief would say, the undertaking is wild; but then I reflect that 'purple and fine linen' cannot make the soul happy -- that 'to cheapen life' is the way 'to abate the fear of death;' and I rejoice in the prospect of having one that will help me to prove, that 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' Then again, our Father hath said, 'the world is mine, and the fullness thereof,' 'the young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.'

"I hope the cloud, if no larger than a man's hand, is beginning to rise and spread along the sky, and drops are falling. May there be a plentiful shower. We have had two camp-meetings on the district -- good order at each. About eighty converted to God; many of whom, I think, will be useful. There will be a continuance of these meetings till the last of October. 'Who is sufficient for these things?' If the Lord do not uphold, I fall."

It will be seen from the foregoing letters that the service of God was foremost with him, even in conducting a correspondence on the subject of matrimony. Nothing was permitted to occupy his attention to the exclusion of Christ, and his cause.

We shall just here introduce a letter which he addressed to Mrs. Early, the sister of Miss Rives, as it refers, incidentally, to the subject of his correspondence with Miss Rives, and as it exhibits in a striking light the exercises of his mind at the time of which we are now writing.

Yadkin District, Guilford Circuit, August 9th, 1833

Dear Sister:-- I sincerely hope this will find you and yours well, and striving for the imperishable riches. Let us not rest satisfied without the "great salvation" -- even a deliverance from the slavery of "this evil world." What a conflict is this! What more than Herculean strength is necessary! Oh! I feel that I am unequal to the task; but in the strength of Jesus the battle shall be won -- the victory ours.

I see no other way to heaven than the one marked out by Christ -- "deny thyself -- take up thy cross and follow me." These originally were the terms, and unalterable must they remain. How beautiful are dear old Bishop Asbury's thoughts on them. He first notices the harmony between the three evangelists on this subject -- Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Our Lord gave the clusters of the promised land in the Sermon on the Mount. Before he published these terms he had given unequivocal proofs of his power and godhead. Oh! sister R., have we not had many evidences of his divinity? We have been striving to follow him for several years. What harm did he ever do us? What good has he not done us? For my part I am so well satisfied with my portion, that I am at a loss for words to utter the memory of the great goodness of the Lord. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." I am ashamed that I move on so slowly -- that I am so tardy in my motion. Yet, oh! blessed be God, my heart seems to fly forward to meet my Saviour. I have lately enjoyed a greater sweetness in my soul, in trying to dispense the word of life, than usual; but I fear not much good done -- this must be left with my Maker.

If your body is still afflicted, the best way to get comfort is to be willing to bear it as long as your heavenly Father sees fit to lay it on you. Believe me, "afflictions are blessings in disguise;" and how consoling the thought, that "He, for our profit," afflicts us, "that we may be partakers of his holiness." Our Lord "was made perfect through suffering." Perhaps I am mistaken, -- but for a long time the thought of afflictions and death, with a view of Christ, brings pleasing sensations to my soul. Not that I want to die. No: but there is a sweet pleasure in having the will of the Lord done by us, and in us. Oh! that we all may "be found to the praise of the glory of his grace." Let our language be --

"Give me a soul inured to pain,  
To hardship, grief, and loss;  
Bold to take up, firm to sustain  
The consecrated cross."

This seems to have been the point aimed at by Mr. Fletcher. Let us imitate his example.

You have no doubt before this heard of my strange proposal to your sister .. I confess that it overflows my heart with gratitude to my heavenly Father, that my suit should thus far meet with success -- it is more than I deserve. I trust I have a good conscience in taking this step; though the poverty of my condition, &c., might be an insuperable barrier.

I long to hear from you, to know how you are progressing in the divine life -- how your dear Christian friends are doing -- the children? Does M\_\_\_\_\_ yet profess? and the servant that was seeking? Oh! I see broad eternity just before me; and I see the necessity of making all our arrangements in full view of boundless eternity! Remember me to all the Christian friends, and say

to them, "Watch, stand fast, be strong, quit yourselves well." This was written amid the bustle of a camp-ground. O sister, let us be instant in prayer, and watch in the same with all perseverance.

Sincerely and affectionately yours in Christ,  
John Wesley Childs  
August 15th

P. S. The camp-meeting closed this morning. We suppose one hundred and seventy-five persons professed religion. What hath God wrought! May his name be honored and praised; and may all the glory be given to the Father, Son, and Spirit. -- J. W. C.

It seems that difficulties arose, which began seriously to threaten a dissolution of the matrimonial engagement to which this correspondence relates. From some quarter, the impression was made upon the mind of Miss Rives that a consummation of the engagement would subject her to privations and hardships that she could not endure. It was thought by her advisers that it would be better to dissolve the engagement, than to consummate it, when by so doing she would probably expose herself to trials for which she was not prepared, and possibly embarrass him -- with his peculiar conscientious scruples -- in the prosecution of the work of the ministry. He was apprised of the state of her mind in reference to this subject, and it was to him a source of extreme anxiety; and yet he did not swerve from his purpose. He remained firm and unshaken amid the conflict. In this state of mind he wrote again to the lady to whom the foregoing letter was addressed; and although the letter is long, we give it entire, as it contains a sort of transcript of his mental and religious exercises at the time to which it relates.

Yadkin Districts Virginia Conference, Sept. 26th, 1833

My Dear Sister:-- Your letter of the 28th ultimo was received last night, and I am much pleased to learn that you remember so unworthy a brother; for I assure you, I am ready to conclude myself the least of all, and should be servant of all. I fear you, and your dear sister Martha, think more highly of me, in a religious point of view, than I deserve; and I have been thinking perhaps this, in part, has grown out of a quotation made by me from Benson's Sermons, in one of my letters to her --

"'Tis done at last -- the great deciding point --  
The world subdued, and Thou hast all my heart."

These words are not exactly applicable to my own state. I fully believe in the possibility, and have enjoyed that state, for several months, I think, at a time; but know, at present, that the fullness is not enjoyed by me. I think I know the cause. Oh the cross! the consecrated cross! There is a shrinking when that is presented; the consequence is a want of "the fullness of the purchased possession." Notwithstanding this, I think, in general, the fear of death has been nearly destroyed for more than three years. My foundation, however, sometimes is this: "He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness." But it takes all the strength I have, at present, to preserve this. Yet there is a better state -- "a kingdom that cannot be moved." How shall we gain possession of it? By "counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord" -- "to know him in the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made

conformable to his death." I verily believe there is no other way; and though the foolish heart, at the instance of the flesh, and the suggestions of Satan, may try a thousand schemes, yet all will prove delusive. Oh! that cross, my sister, is an odious thing to human nature! Yet how delightful, when we take it up in the name of Jesus!

Oct. 4th. Since writing the above, have attended a camp-meeting where about sixty souls were converted.

One thought in your letter awakened in my mind a number of very painful reflections; namely, the objections alluded to ... I fear that my views of bearing the cross go farther than you, or your dear sister Martha apprehend. Oh! it has been like a sword piercing me; but God has given me comfort. In my first letter to her, on this important subject, I intended to state the case fully, and did, to my own mind; but perhaps not to hers. I assure you my views of pure and undefiled religion have not changed since our conversation, coming from the Buckingham camp-meeting last year. But let me tell you, I have been striving, honestly, to pursue what would be called an honorable way, in the eyes of the world, and thousands of Christians, for the last eleven months; and find that there is no other way for me but the way of the cross, of reproach, and shame. All the liberty that I have found in preaching, since I have been on this district, has been in full view of this -- should God call me to walk and preach, to be willing to obey the heavenly call. And my heart at this moment responds to the sentiment. Indeed, let me have any other intention, and darkness and guilt, sorrow and trembling, are the consequences. At this moment I am convinced the reason why I am not more holy is, because, I do not lay out all my strength for God, and do not resolutely trample the world under my feet. I see the world -- comparatively, the Christian world -- "lying in wickedness." I know as a watchman, if I give not warning their blood will be required at my hands. As for human praise, in the general, I think I hate it; but oh! let me have the approbation of my God, and nothing can move me. I feel an earnest of it while I write. "I see from far the beautiful light." To compromise with the world and Satan, is what I dare not do. Whenever I have made the experiment, it has been ruinous to my own peace. And oh! I had rather have the whole world against me, than my conscience, and my God!

You complain of comparative lethargy ... Mr. Wesley says, "beware of Antinomian books" -- teach not the poison. I think it not unlikely that the little book called the "Saint's Pocket Book," contributed its share towards this state of mind. There are many good things in it, and a number calculated to lull us to sleep. Depend upon it, the way to Heaven is a way of activity, and unwearied continuance in well-doing --

"Come, let us anew our journey pursue,  
With vigor arise, and press to a permanent place in the skies."

Let us play our part well, that our "yesterdays may look backwards with a smile, and not wound us in their flight." Thousands, I fear, under the garb of religion are in quest of dreams. They may be said to seek anything rather than "the mind which was in Christ;" and at death's approach they will learn their folly...

When I am willing to bear the cross all is joy and peace -- when I turn aside, all is confusion and discontent. Strange that this foolish heart should go astray after vain and fleeting

trifles. Yet I know there is a remedy, and that remedy I enjoyed for five months last year.\* [\*It appears to me that Childs was depending entirely too much on his own works to have and keep the experience of entire sanctification. -- DVM] Oh! the delightful state, to be cleansed throughout soul, body and spirit. I have had many changes in my feelings since we conversed together last, and have been trying in every possible way to see if I could not reconcile a little of this world with religion; but find it a vain attempt: He requires truth in the inward parts. Nothing short of the soul's being purified will make us really happy. My mind says, "O God, my heart is fixed." What shall I do to keep what I now feel?\*" [He seems as well to have judged his spiritual state too much by what he felt. -- DVM] God has been very good to me for some days past, in giving me spiritual liberty. I know he is ever willing to give, and upbraid me not ... Ease, ease, sister E. is slaying its thousands of Christians! Let us shake ourselves from the dust, and stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God."

May the Author of good be with you and yours -- may light shine upon your tabernacle; and believe me to be sincerely your brother in Christ.

John W. Childs

The above letter bears the marks of honesty and integrity of purpose; and everyone will be constrained to admit, that, if Mr. Childs was in error in his views of religion; and, especially, in relation to what he conceived to be his peculiar duty, he was nevertheless extremely sincere and conscientious in his opinions. He was aware that the sentiments which he held would probably hazard the continuance of his matrimonial engagement. But the approbation of his God, and of a good conscience were too highly prized by him to be given up for the attainment of any temporal end. He would rather be despised and rejected of men, as was his Master, than to forfeit the approval of his own conscience in the sight of God. And in all this, what docility, and humility does he display! He does not take his position in stubbornness, or in anger, or resentment; but in meekness; and because he feels that his salvation is deeply involved in the question at issue. Who can tell what struggles he had in his own mind! What a contest with the flesh and the devil! We are in fact compelled to look upon him as displaying more true heroism in maintaining his position under such a trial, than is displayed by the conqueror in taking a city.

Mr. Childs was not long kept in a state of suspense as to the result of the difficulties which had been presented to the mind of his betrothed. About the middle of October he received a letter from her, proposing to dismiss the whole subject from further consideration. To this he replied as follows:

Davidson Circuit, Yadkin District, Va. Conference, October 23d, 1833

My Dear Sister Martha:-- Your esteemed and affectionate favor of the 9th inst. came to hand readily, and found me attending a camp-meeting near Greensborough. I have held one other since in the same county; and am now in Davidson, expecting to commence one on Friday next. We had unusually bad weather at the last, and consequently not much good done. However, we must sow our seed, not knowing which shall prosper, and commit all to him "who points the clouds their course."

I have read what you have written in your last over and over, and over again; and am constrained to say it exalts you in my estimation; but at the same time feel that I should be doing you injustice if I were to conceal from you my -- as I believe -- honest views. I will therefore be allowed to say that, in making my proposal, I never had any thought in my mind that you should walk; nor do I now have any scruple upon my own mind, on the subject, when there is a necessity for traveling in a different way. But in my ordinary appointments I am persuaded that it would be better for me to walk; and am of the opinion that I am in the general, fully able to do so.

If I have any commission to preach at all, it is to the poor; and I am very sensible that I shall be able to give them many proofs of the honesty of my intentions in that way, [by walking] that I could not so long as I go in what my conscience tells me is (a dishonorable\*) way. [\* In the printed text, the words here were: (an honorable). But, I find no way to make sense of the sentence, but by changing the words to (a dishonorable), or their equivalent. -- DVM]

Besides, I am seeking lowliness of heart; and my experience, as well as reason and Scripture, tell me that is the way to find it. Jesus himself walked -- the apostles walked, and oh! shall I not esteem it a favor to tread in their steps. Indeed, I feel myself unworthy to imitate such bright examples; but yet there is a secret voice that whispers in my ears, "this is the way," and though unworthy, I hope that God will accept the sacrifice. My experience assures me that it is the better way for the soul.

It would be nothing for me to tell you that I think more highly of you than any of your sex; for this is what you have a right to believe from what has already taken place. But then I must tell you, in the language of David, "my soul is even as a weaned child;" and I really do prefer the voice of God and conscience, to all other earthly considerations. If, therefore, the word has gone forth, out of your lips, it must be so; and I will endeavor to pray for you, and as far as I have it in my power, to help you on to heaven.

If I have wronged you, or caused you one moment's pain, on my knees I beg your forgiveness; and be well assured I have not lost confidence in you, but rather have it heightened. But perhaps it is for the best, and what we know not now, (in the present world,) we shall know hereafter, (in the eternal.)

I have this morning read Mr. Wesley's sermon on the "Devices of Satan" -- have read it before. I am pleased with it, but do not think it applicable to my case; for in all my exercises I do not lose confidence in my God. I know generally, I have love, joy, and peace. These are the fruits of the kingdom. What I am deficient in, is a fullness of these, and the higher branches of the kingdom, as described in Galatians, namely -- longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance, &c. Though, blessed be God, for what I do feel of even these. I know there is such a thing as perfect love; and I know when the soul is in possession of it, there is a consciousness of it. It is "the kingdom that cannot be moved," mentioned in the 12th of Hebrews. I think I hold fast. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." This is my rejoicing, "not by works of righteousness," &c. But then I want to witness that "the blood of the everlasting covenant" has made me "perfect in every good work to do his will." God is willing, and I know if the work is not accomplished the fault is in me.\*



[\*The fault, as I perceive it from his writings, was in placing his faith in his feelings and in his doings, instead of in the cleansing blood of Christ -- depending too much on how he felt and what he did for having and retaining a pure heart, and the witness thereof. He was a deeply devout man -- one whom God used mightily, however, in spite of his misplaced faith. -- DVM]

We have had, I think, between eleven and twelve hundred converted on this district, the present year. Blessed be God. I see an awful want of conformity to the image of Christ among Christians generally. Oh! may we be such as He would have us be -- let us be "found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." I rejoice in the prospect of being more holy, humble, and heavenly-minded. I long to experience all his name, and have yearning bowels of pity for all mankind. May we grow in grace yet more and more. I want to be dead to the world, and feel that I am crucified with Christ. May the head of the church be your head.

Affectionately yours,  
John W. Childs

The difficulties referred to, which led Miss Rives to propose a dissolution of the existing engagement, had been removed from her mind before she received the letter which we have just spread before the reader. These difficulties, it will be seen, had grown out of a misapprehension of the extent to which he carried his views in relation to the manner in which he felt it to be his duty to bear his message to sinners. She had frankly stated her objections to his walking and preaching; and supposing that he carried those views to such an extent as might subject her to great personal inconvenience, in the event of their marriage, she had remonstrated with him; and more than intimated that, unless his views on this subject were modified, it might prove a barrier to their union. As soon, however, as her mind was disabused of the erroneous impressions which she had received on this subject, she revoked the decision by which the engagement was dissolved; and this she did before the receipt of his letter of 28d October. [Her letter revoking her decision not to marry him had lain in the Post Office several weeks before he received it.] On the reception of her letter, he writes as follows:--

Greensborough, N. C., January 1st, 1834

My Dear Sister Martha:-- Your welcome favor was not received by me until this day; and I have now rode thirty miles out of my way to get it. I therefore hasten to reply, lest you charge me with neglect. I am truly sorry you have been left in a state of suspense so long. Perhaps it will try all your patience.

I feel comforted in the course you have taken, and think I see the hand of God evidently in all. Say, in the first place, in trying us both, as he did Abraham of old. Secondly, we have had a mutual proof of our affection for each other and for God. Thirdly, I can say with truth, I trust that I have learned to live more by faith since I last wrote you, than ever before. Have enjoyed, and do enjoy, more mental quiet, more uninterrupted communion with God, and have found more rest in my spirit, than in all my life, -- feel more like making "full proof of my ministry." Outward things are more sensibly sanctified to me. In a word, I think I love God with all my heart. Oh! my dear sister, I long to communicate my transports to all the world. I have lately had such sweetness and liberty in preaching, as I have long prayed for, but never found. I feel, too, this is but a drop of

what my heavenly Father has in store for me. If I shall only be faithful, "grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life." The Lord has indeed given me "good measure, heaped up, shaken together, and running over;" and all I am concerned about is, how I shall guard the sacred treasure? Will you not think that I magnify? I certainly do, and have enjoyed more comfort in my soul, from Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, within the last month, than ever, within the same space of time in my life. How often have I said with Jacob, "if the Lord will but keep me in the way that I go," &c. At other times I have thought, perhaps I am taken up, like our Lord, upon a high mountain. However this may be, I feel a spirit, nearly always, to pray, rejoice, and give thanks. I feel a heart to pray for, and pity poor sinners; and an ardent desire to communicate some spiritual gift to believers to the end that they may be established. Oh, sister! how desirable to "be led by the Spirit." May our heavenly Father keep us both in the way he would have us go. Even so, Amen.

You say I mentioned nothing about visiting Lynchburg. I will frankly tell you the reason. As matters stood, I was afraid to trust myself. Here, at a distance, reason and revelation sat on the throne; but, if there, I thought affection might overcome my judgment. And even now, I sometimes think, if you knew how little I think of this world's goods, you would scarcely be willing to put yourself under the care of one so improvident. I still literally give away nearly everything, and refuse money from various quarters, when it is offered me. Yet I have no more doubt of heavenly protection than of my own existence. Oh! the sweet lesson taught us by our Lord in the sixth chapter of Matthew...

My appointments will not allow me to visit Lynchburg before the last of the month. If you have no objection, I should prefer our union's being solemnized in the church.

I fear this letter may appear too highly colored; but I think I have endeavored to write you simply the thoughts and state of my heart. I love my God through Jesus Christ, and love you, and all mankind. I think my affection is sincere. Oh! let us in every step we take, follow our blessed Saviour, and the wise and pious who have gone before. Meantime, let us love and pray for the church, and for the world. May the Lord give us peace, and truth, and the blessings of his goodness.

Adieu in Jesus.  
John Wesley Childs

The next letter was written after Mr. Childs had visited Lynchburg, and while he was on his way from Richmond to Raleigh. The letter is principally interesting, as it gives an account of his labors and exercises of mind during his trip, of which we have seen something in his diary.

Dinwiddie county, Va., February 10th, 1884

My Dear Sister Martha:-- After leaving you I was overtaken, first by the rain; secondly, by the snow. Found the friends generally well in Buckingham. Preached to a handful of colored and white on Sunday, and the power of God seemed to be very manifest, both to awaken and to comfort. Directed my course on toward Richmond, in opposition to much solicitation to "stay and preach for us;" and believe now I did wrong. For first, it was deep and heavy traveling; secondly, it fatigued me more, I believe, than I have been for twelve months; thirdly, my soul got into quite an

uncomfortable frame, and seemed to be sick and sore. Indeed, I have no doubt that I wandered out of the order of Providence, for I did not reach Richmond until Thursday last, and found there was no appointment for preaching, though it was the regular preaching night. My friends were glad to see me. They desired me to stay with them over Sabbath; but as I did not like to be so far from the seat of Conference at so late a period, I set off for Petersburg, where I arrived in the evening, and put up at the house of Bro. Thomas Branch, a devoted and praying Christian ... Preached for them on Sabbath morning; and unfaithful, and unworthy as I am, believe the Lord accompanied it with power. Preached to the colored people in the afternoon, and was desired to assist again at night; but the rain coming on, we turned it into a prayer meeting.

I am now on my way to Brunswick, where I have several appointments for this week, if the notices have been given. My soul begins to feel better, though my body has been somewhat afflicted today. May His will be done by us, in us, and through us...

"Let us go on to perfection" in love, in patience, in resignation, in doing and suffering all the will of God...

Sincerely and affectionately yours,  
John W. Childs

His next letter was written from Raleigh, N. C., during the session of the Conference, and is dated February 26th, 1834. It contains nothing of special interest to the public. He says, "the time you mention, March 13th, for our marriage, seems to be the most convenient that could be fixed upon; and the arrangement to have it at Bro. Early's instead of the church, is perfectly satisfactory. You know my object in first naming the church, and as we have reason to believe that end cannot now be secured, of course the arrangement falls to the ground. Only let us have the glory of God in view, and aim singly at this, and all shall be well." "Through grace," he adds, "I possess my soul in peace; though, at present, I enjoy not the fullness. I see a great want of scriptural holiness; and fear I am too much of a coward to show myself a man for God. How much I need your prayers, that I may learn the happy art, 'with meekness to reprove.' A few of our brethren are all alive, for which I praise the Lord; but how few, compared to the great body!"

The last letter written by Mr. Childs to Miss Rives before their marriage, was written while on his way from Raleigh to Lynchburg, while attending the exercises connected with the Inauguration of Rev. Stephen Olin, as President of Randolph Macon College. And as it contains several points of interest, and is especially characteristic, we will give it nearly entire. That it is slightly tinged with apparent censoriousness will probably strike the mind of the reader; but it is our business to present a faithful portraiture of the man, as nearly as we can, drawn by his own hand.

Mecklenburg County, Va., March 6th, 1834

My Dear Sister Martha:-- To relieve my mind a little from intense thought, I will address you a few lines, sincerely hoping they may find you well both in soul and body, and still "pressing forward to the mark of the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." How earnestly do I desire perfection! But where is it to be found? In the church? The glory, I fear, is

well-nigh departed. In our modern books? Only here and there a vestige is to be found. I tremble for the state of the church; my heart within me almost makes a noise. This world! vanity, show, outward equipage -- even eloquence and learning -- good as they are, when sanctified and wholly consecrated to God -- are set up in the place of the grace of God in the soul. O my God, undertake thine own cause, and subvert the whole works of the devil.

I see more clearly than ever, if we would have heaven we must enter in at "the strait gate;" and the difficulty of doing this is the greater, as there are so many who would fain have you believe they are entering in, or have entered, who, nevertheless, are walking in "the broad way." O Lord, open their eyes. I trust, however, the eyes of my dear Martha are already opened to this subject. Let us watch and keep awake. Perhaps you may say, I fear "where no fear is." I think I am convinced this is not the fact. At any rate, I should be wonderfully pleased to find, in some things, I am mistaken. But no: his word cannot fail. It must stand when heaven and earth shall have "fled and gone." How dreadful, then, to live with the means of instruction perfectly in our power, and yet put false glosses upon the plain word of the living God! Nature, fallen human nature, abhors the cross. Let us pray for grace cheerfully to embrace it: even so, Lord Jesus, give us wisdom, power, and grace to do so; and then, my experience assures me, we shall be happy.

It has been suggested to me that I should so far conform to the rules of propriety as to get an additional suit of clothes to be married in. Time was when this would have been exceedingly plausible; but it is past. That time, I trust, "will suffice." I see no good reason, either from Scripture or common sense; and I have mistaken the bent of your mind if you require it. Oh! let us be examples to all around us, worthy of imitation; and strive literally to fulfill our Lord's words where he teaches "it is better to give than to receive." The fewer our wants, the more easily will they be supplied. The above thoughts you would do well to keep tolerably close, unless the glory of God or the good of others be the reason for presenting them.

I feel that during the time of the Conference, I have acted the part of a poor coward. I have not reprov'd, rebuked, exhorted "with all longsuffering and doctrine." Oh! what firmness and courage does it require to be a mouth for God. Nevertheless, owing to my peculiar circumstances, the Lord has dealt kindly, tenderly with me. I trust he will heal me entirely, and give me grace yet to "war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience." ... Shall we not be a mutual help to each other? I trust so. Let us watch, pray, and give ourselves up entirely to the honorable service of our Maker through our blessed Redeemer. He will guide us by his counsel, and afterward receive us to glory.

I hear, in this county, of the death of several of my old friends and companions in tribulation: among them, old Brother Stephen Dance. He was a saint indeed. I fear he has left but few like him behind for solid piety. May our God raise up a host to people the church and the world.

Yesterday, I heard President Olin's inaugural address. It was good; but I sincerely fear God is not sufficiently acknowledged in that place. It seems to me that there is a show of religion hanging about many -- a vain attempt to hang flowers about the bitter truths of the Gospel, to suit them to the relish of the half-hearted and the vain. But how foolish is this! Not that I would be for rendering religion hateful. No: but there is a seriousness in the matter that is becoming, and there is

something even in form that I am persuaded God is well pleased with. For instance, bowing the knee when in a place consecrated to religious services. May the Good One correct what is amiss.

When I commenced this, I did not expect to say half as much. I hope it will not be altogether uninteresting.

Let us strive to live every moment for God -- for eternity! Let us permit no moment to pass, "but in purchase of its worth." And who can estimate the value of a moment of time? May we not inquire of death-beds to get a proper answer? Oh! that we may cleave closer to God, and "be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make our requests known unto God." Meantime I leave you in His care whose eye never slumbers or sleeps. May we in all things so please him that He may direct our paths. So prays your affectionate

John W. Childs

Here ends this correspondence; and we very much doubt, if the annals of courtship were written up, whether a parallel could be found.

On the 13th of March, 1834, Mr. Childs was married to Miss Martha S. Rives, in the house of the Rev. John Early, in the town of Lynchburg, Virginia. The rites were solemnized by Rev. Early.

In the selection of a wife, he found one peculiarly qualified to suit his disposition, habits, and views; and, through sixteen years, as his companion, amid the privations, hardships, and trials of the Methodist itinerant life, she proved herself every way worthy of the exceedingly high estimate which he placed upon her before their marriage.

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## Chapter 10 SALISBURY DISTRICT -- 1834

Returns to his district -- Diary -- Narrow escape of himself and wife -- Letter to Mrs. E. -- His labors -- Revivals -- Letter to his wife -- Diary -- Attack of illness -- End of the year -- Leaves his wife and child for Conference -- Appointed to the Amherst circuit -- Review of his labors as a Presiding Elder

In a few days after his marriage, Mr. Childs proceeded from Lynchburg to his district, and with as little delay as possible commenced his round of quarterly meetings.

The entries in his diary present but little variety; but continue to exhibit the same elevated tone of piety and spiritual enjoyment, that we have seen in previous extracts. In the little sententious prayers which abound in his entries, he includes his wife with himself; praying for her protection, health, spiritual comfort, and growth in grace, as well as his own. The following we shall present as a specimen, and pass on with only occasional, and very much abridged quotations from his diary.

"At Bro. Smith's, near Gethsemane, Guilford circuit, April 7th, 1834 -- Rose before four -- prayed and read my Bible for more than an hour. The Lord was in a degree present, and my soul rejoiced from a comfortable persuasion, that he will be with me to prosper the work of my hands. May our God give his blessing to his general church. Be with me this day, and bring me in peace to see my dear wife. I thank thee, O Lord, that I have one. O teach me to love her for thy sake, and may we do thy will on earth as it is done in heaven."

April 9th, in writing to Mrs. Early of Lynchburg, he says: "My great concern is that I may act, in any degree, worthy of her, of whom God has made me the husband. This I cannot do without divine assistance. Oh that we may be faithful to our God, and to each other in every thing! I know it requires grace; but then I believe there is a fullness laid up for us in Christ Jesus. So far, God has manifestly opened up our way. May the Head of the church ever be with us, and grant us great success in our labors for the advancement of his kingdom. I see clearly, if we would 'inherit all things,' we must overcome; and there is no overcoming without fighting. Let us then fight the good fight of faith. There are many things to fight against, and with, that some, who are reputedly religious will tell you are perfectly compatible with the cross of Christ. Oh! let us beware of these saints of the present world, and draw our maxims from the Bible. 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.' Labor every day to take higher ground. 'Reprove, exhort, admonish' all that you have any intercourse with, and God will give you his blessing. 'He that waters shall be watered.' Meanwhile, let us hang by faith upon our God,

'Till we his glory see;  
and,

'Until the sprinkling of his blood,  
Shall speak us up to heaven.'"

Mr. Childs left his wife with a friend in Germantown, Stokes county, and went to the mountainous part of his district to attend his meetings; where, on the 6th of May, he writes in his diary:-- "I rejoice that God seems to be renewing my health; have some sweet intimations that the Lord will revive his work by my feeble instrumentality. O Jesus, if thou canst work by such a poor worm, be pleased to prepare, make me entirely holy in heart, life, and all manner of conversation."

On the same date he writes to his wife. The letter is full of affection; but we shall only quote the portion that relates especially to his own experience.

"If I know myself;" he writes, "I enjoy more of God than I ever did in my life; yet more humility is wanting on my part. I feel, my dear, that God is good -- that my soul blesses him, (though not sufficiently,) that he satisfies my mouth with good things, so that, comparatively, my youth is renewed like the eagle's; and, if not mistaken, feel more than ever resolved to run on in the good way that leads to heaven."

The few weeks that he was absent from Mrs. Childs, were spent among his friends in the counties of Wilkes and Iredell, where he was surrounded by every thing to please the eye and cheer the mind. It was in the balmy month of May. The forests upon the mountains were putting on

their glossy dress of summer foliage. The crystal streams that had been fettered in ice, were again rejoicing with a merry laugh along the vales. The glittering cascade was flashing in the sunlight, upon the face of the precipitous rock, and suddenly disappearing in the deep chasm at its foot. The fragrance of the sweet spring blossoms was upon every passing breeze; while overhead were the blue heavens, and all around the hum of bees, and the song of birds. The plowman was in his furrow; the cattle were browsing upon the hills and sunny glades; the quiet homes of the farmers -- were seen dotting the landscape, surrounded with clumps of forest trees, and lapped in secluded dells, at the base of the mountains. Wherever he went he met with a cordial greeting, and a hearty welcome. But his eye was steadily placed on the heavenly city; and his diary contains scarcely an allusion to the enchanting scenery, or the hospitable friends around him. Day after day, he seeks a country out of sight. "His face was set as though he would go beyond;" his affections were on things above; and he seems to have been but little influenced by the things of this life.

He commenced holding camp-meetings at an early period in this year. May the 20th, we find the following in his journal.

"The camp-meeting closed this day at Liberty. Not a great many converted; but, O Lord, we thank thee for the manifestations of thy grace. Some were cut to the heart, and some found peace in believing. O carry on thy work, and make thy people and ministers holy and happy. Lord, I thank thee for the manifestations of thy grace to my poor soul. Oh! for more of that wisdom which is from above. Help me and my dear wife to do thy will more perfectly on earth, and then do thou bring us both to heaven.

"I confess my shortcomings, my backslidings, my unworthiness; yet, nevertheless, I do praise thee that thou hast lately given me more perfect, permanent, and abiding peace, than hitherto I have known."

In the early part of the month of June, while on his way to one of his appointments in the neighborhood of Greensborough, his horse took fright and ran away with his vehicle; and but for the kind intervention of Providence, he and his wife both must have been killed. They were thrown violently upon the ground, the vehicle was broken in pieces, and they were left but slightly injured, by the road. In a few days thereafter, they were again exposed in the same way; but unfortunately, did not escape so well. Their horse ran away, thrusting them out with such violence, as very seriously to injure Mrs. Childs, though he escaped with only some very slight contusions. He makes the following allusion to these casualties in his diary.

"At Brother John Harris', June 16th -- Since the above was written, [alluding to his previous entries] Lord, what hast thou called me to pass through! Both myself and wife have been called to pass through a fiery ordeal. How near to death have we been! yet thou hast not delivered us over. O Lord, accept our thanks for thy goodness in sparing us, and may the residue of our days be unreservedly consecrated to thee." In the following letter he also alludes to this subject.

Greensborough, D. C., May 20th, 1834

Dear Sister E. -- We have to thank the Lord that we are alive; for although we have met with two accidents recently, by the running away of our beast, yet no bones have been broken. But

Martha as well as myself were bruised to a considerable extent. The hardest part appears to have fallen on her...

Let us adore the hand of the Almighty and bless him, that his judgments are mixed with mercy. We are not discouraged, but trust we are more disposed to give up all for God, for Christ, for Heaven! May the Holy Ghost sanctify this dispensation of his providence, and teach us the lesson he would have us learn therefrom.

We have exchanged our animal for a strong horse, which we think was thrown in our way by the hand of our kind Father in Heaven. Oh! could we so use these creatures as to be thankful to the Almighty Creator.

I see more clearly that we are in continual danger of taking our eye off of the mark of holiness, set before us in the Scriptures, and substituting something else in its place. If I dared to express my thoughts, I should say multitudes do it; and some, I fear, whose lives are handed down to us as examples for us to follow. But enough; let us see to it that we be followers of those, who, "through faith and patience inherit the promises." ...

We are trying to cut off every yoke, and live, and preach plain, wholesome truth.

Affectionately yours,  
John W. Childs

On the same date he writes in his diary -- "I have this day read with profit, Mr. Wesley's sermon on the "Danger of increasing in Riches," and discover more clearly that we are an assembly of unjust men. Lord forgive the covetousness of thy people, and save them for thy mercies' sake. Oh! help us all to awake, and watch, and pray --

"Tread all the powers of darkness down,  
And win the well-fought day."

"Saturday morning, June 21st -- Rose at four -- attended prayer-meeting at the church, at sunrise. Was comforted -- Lord do thou 'lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies.'"

Henceforth we find him actively engaged in the work of the ministry. In all the towns and villages where he lodged he held sunrise prayer-meetings. At these he often lectured. The work of revival began to spread in every direction, and a large number of souls were converted to God. Amid all, his soul seems to have been constantly stayed upon God; and daily he records the goodness of his Heavenly Father in continuing to manifest his gracious presence to his heart. His enjoyments seem to have been very uniform for several months. But so exalted were his views of Christian obligation, and so high was his standard of religious duty, that in looking around him upon the church, he saw but little to commend.

In writing to the Rev. John Early, July 5th, he says, -- "I try to keep myself awake, but I fear there are many things to be corrected; and who is sufficient for these things? I frankly confess I am not; and I exceedingly fear that I am out of my element. I earnestly desire to do good, but think my



call is to do it in a narrower sphere. I long to be little and unknown, loved and prized by God, and by good people alone. But I see the world knows not how properly to estimate such a course. Be it so; this is my cross and I must bear it: and, I may add, a great part of what is called the Christian world appear to have their eyes but a little more enlightened on the subject. How many there are who yet 'savor the things that be of men.' Say I these things by way of censure? Heaven knows that I would sing for joy of heart, could I see it otherwise. But it is my deliberate opinion, if Mr. Wesley's interpretation of the Bible be taken for good gold, there are but few who will not be found wanting when weighed in the balances. I desire to begin with judging myself; and confess frankly, I have come far short of my privilege and duty. I hear the voice of God saying 'Be ye holy, for I am holy;' and there are many great and precious promises, that by them we might have hope. But who are the witnesses of these things? Here and there a solitary traveler. I bless the Lord for the good I see; and for the prospect of good that seems to be opening. But where are the Wesleys, the Fletchers, the Grimshaws, the Nelsons? Men who practiced every part of their creed in their own lives. Oh, brother E.! could I see this, -- much as I love some, in this world, I should be ready to say, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' 'Who will rise up against the evil doers?' May the Almighty raise up a host -- men of clean hands and pure hearts."

From his journal we make the following extracts.

"Germantown, July 5th -- O let every instance of thy goodness lead me to repentance; and may I get wiser and better by daily experience. I thank thee for judgments, for crosses, for losses, for all thou doest give me to suffer, if by any means I may be ready for thy coming."

"July 8th -- O suffer me not to turn thy grace into lasciviousness; but give me

"That solemn awe that dares not move,  
And all the silent heaven of love."

"July 9th -- On the camp-ground, Mount Vernon. For several days have enjoyed unusual rest in my spirit by looking unto Jesus. O my Saviour, I want more of thy transforming influence. Let it come down on me, 'and make me all like thyself' -- 'full of goodness -- full of thee.'"

"July 16th -- At Mr. Poindexter's. Lord, give me a more amiable spirit, that I may know how to let my light shine most to thy glory. I want new love, new light, new heat. As one says, 'make me as active as fire, and as steady as the needle to the pole in thy service.' O for grace to love thee more."

"July 18th -- Lay in my bed till near half-past six! Was this because of weariness and fatigue, or a disposition to backslide? Lord, show me."

"July 19th. -- Rose at half after five. Still an hour behind my usual time."

He was now absent from his wife, to whom he wrote, July 19th, 1884, as follows:--

My Dear Martha Susan:-- Through the tender mercies of our God I have arrived safely at the place appointed for the quarterly meeting, but in consequence of continued rains have not had an opportunity of preaching since I left. I have had some waves of temptation and affliction to pass through, but thank God my anchor seems to be cast within the veil, and I trust is held fast by the cable of faith. This day my soul has had some comfortable and refreshing views of Jesus, and I want to know more of the length, breadth, height and depth of his dying love. Oh, for more and still more! I want to bathe my soul in the vast ocean of God's unmeasurable love. Oh! to be united to Christ -- to submit to his authority completely, what unutterable sweetness does it bring to the soul! How much I need your prayers, and your advice too, which latter I fear you feel a delicacy in giving. Oh! my dear, if it be heavenly and holy, it shall be received with all thankfulness. Have I pained you by any roughness or harshness? If I have, forgive me, my dear, and try to cure me by a mild remonstrance, and by your prayers. There may be the appearance of roughness sometimes, when it is not intended by your husband; but he has a 'jealous, godly fear' over himself when certain points are touched. He knows how liable he is to fail in his duty -- he knows that many have failed, occupying the ground he now does, (that of a married preacher,) and therefore he fears that he may sometimes answer her who is dearer to him than life, in the way just alluded to. I refer to your question, whether I could not remain till the afternoon of the day on which I left you?

July 22d -- Since writing the above I have preached three times. Our gracious God was merciful at each effort, and apparent good was done, -- a number bowed as mourners, and some seemed to be comforted.

Upon the whole my soul has enjoyed a degree of prosperity since I commenced this letter. But oh! how far short of Mrs. Maxwell do I come. In reading the first volume of her letters I took up the notion she was but a poor letter writer; but have seen cause to change my opinion. She certainly was a holy and deeply spiritual woman, surpassing, in my judgment, Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Rogers, or any one else that I have read of, except Mrs. Cooper: though my judgment was quite immature when I read Mrs. Cooper's letters...

My dear, let us abide in Christ, and strive for a closer walk with God. All this is to be effected by a more intimate union, communion -- or rather, acquaintance with Jesus.

Your affectionate husband,  
John Wesley Childs

"July 30th -- Yesterday was a day of trial and sore temptation. Lord, forgive wherein I have grieved thee. Oh! I am conscious I neglected my usual devotions in the morning; and, as is generally the case, was strongly tossed during the day. O my God, forgive, and grant me grace to do better for the time to come."

"August 8th -- How variously have I been tossed since an entry was made. Oh, the blasts of adversity and temptation! Lord Jesus, save me, and deliver me from evil. Thou alone canst help me. Oh! for thy mercy's sake forgive my past follies and transgressions, and give me a new and clean heart."

For a week or more following the last date Mr. Childs seems to have been in sore trial. He complains of his want of communion with God -- his coldness and barrenness of soul. From this uncomfortable state of mind he was happily relieved, and on the 21st August, he thus writes -- "Oh, how precious is thy word. My God, it is better to me than thousands of gold and silver. Through thy precepts I get understanding: I hate every false way." And again on the 27th -- "My God, how many are thy mercies! who can count them? I would bless thee for life with all its comforts; and even for those things of a contrary nature that are intended to further me in the divine life." Sept. 4th, he writes -- "For some days my body has been much affected -- the corruptible body presses down the soul. Yet God is good, and in the midst of my afflictions, he, from time to time, manifests himself to me. O my God, slay every traitor in my heart, and set up thy kingdom, which consists in 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

"Sept. 16th, Lexington, at the close of the camp-meeting. -- The Lord was graciously present with me in my devotions this morning; and has been unusually so for some time past. O, my God, I will here record thy lovingkindness towards me, a poor worm, for it is great. Preserve me from this time forth, and for evermore."

Sept. 17th, in writing to his Lynchburg correspondent, he says -- "I have lately enjoyed a nearer access to the throne of grace, and find that the faithfulness of my God is greater than I have any language to express adequate ideas of. If I had a thousand tongues I would employ them all in speaking of the lovingkindness of the Lord. Oh, he is good, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

Sept. 18th -- He solemnly dedicated himself again wholly to God. This act of consecration he wrote in the following words:-- "Here I would devote anew my soul, body, and spirit -- all that I have, and all that I am to thee. Oh! do thou accept through Jesus Christ. -- J. W. Childs."

More than a month elapsed before another entry was made, during which time he passed through a severe attack of illness, which he bore without a murmur. His wife also was deeply afflicted for several weeks; but none of these things moved him, nor did he count his life dear to him, "so he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Nov. 28th, he writes -- "My soul still follows hard after God. My health in a degree, thou hast restored. Be pleased, O Lord, to give me that measure of health that thou seest best. If it be thy will, grant me good health -- yet, let thy will be done. Grant me wisdom to spend time, strength, talents all to thy honour and glory."

The Conference year was now drawing to a close, and he was busily engaged in closing up the quarterly meetings on his district, and arranging affairs for his successor, should he be released from the presiding eldership, which he seems very sincerely to have desired. His diary seems to have been neglected; for we find no entry from the 28th November till the 27th December.

Jan. 1st. 1835 -- We find him at Germantown where he makes the following entry: "O my God, thou alone art my portion. Be pleased, this day, to accept of our souls and bodies, a living

sacrifice, through Jesus Christ. May the past follies and sins of our lives be blotted out, and our names recorded in the book of life."

The above is the last entry which he made before Conference. Mr. Childs left his wife and infant, with his kind friend and brother (Mr. Gibson) in Germantown, North Carolina, and proceeded to Lynchburg, the seat of the Conference, where he arrived in safety, though much exposed to cold and fatigue by the way. From this place, Feb. 11th, he writes to Mrs. Childs:-- "I feel thankful, as things are, that I made the effort to come to Conference, as there would have been some confusion in my business without my presence. And if you are preserved, and our heavenly Father permits us to see each other again in peace, his name shall have all the praise. O, my dear, let us give up ourselves more unreservedly to his service."

Feb. 17 -- He says, in another letter to Mrs. Childs:-- "In relation to my appointment for the next year I have not yet come to any settled conclusion. Oh! that our heavenly Father may direct in this matter." He then adds, "let us seek all our happiness in God; and I verily believe we shall have more real happiness, even of an earthly nature, than we could possibly have by pursuing any other course."

From this conference Mr. Childs was appointed to the pastoral oversight of the Amherst Circuit, lying on the north side of James river, and immediately adjacent to Lynchburg.

We shall close this chapter with a brief review of Mr. Childs' labors as presiding elder. He seems reluctantly to have accepted this post in the Church; and the reader is already advised that he was constantly laboring under the impression that it was not his appropriate sphere of ministerial duty. And yet, it may be said with safety, that no man was ever more acceptable, in this relation to church than was Mr. Childs as presiding elder of the district on which, for two years, he labored with so much fidelity and success.

His intercourse with the families where he lodged was most salutary. He was always about his Master's work; and wherever an opportunity to do good presented itself he availed himself of it. He conversed with the children and servants of the households wherever he went, upon the subject of religion; and, in many instances, while spending two or three days in a family, was instrumental in their conversion. At family prayer he read and expounded the Scriptures; and in the evening he took occasion to exhort the servants, and instruct them in the plan of salvation. And many on the Salisbury district will doubtless rise up in the day of judgment, and call him blessed, for teaching them the way of life.

But it was in his oversight of the preachers in his district that his influence was most powerfully felt as a presiding elder. He carefully and tenderly watched over the young men placed under his care. At his quarterly meetings he took occasion to throw himself with them as much as possible; and by kind advices, and affectionate admonitions, endeavored to correct the little improprieties and failings which he deemed of sufficient moment to require attention. He was not a censorious critic; and yet he listened critically to the sermons of his young men; and whatever he discovered in their manner, pronunciation, gesture, style, &c., that should be corrected, he noted it at the time, and then sought a suitable occasion to call attention to it. This he did, in an evening walk on the road, or when alone with the person in his room.

When reproof was necessary he administered it with the utmost tenderness. The consequence was, his young men loved him, and were unembarrassed in his presence. And then, eternity alone will reveal the good which he did in his private intercourse with his preachers, by the silent, yet almost irresistible influence of his example, as a man of piety and prayer. He proposed private prayer so often when alone with his preachers, and spent so much time upon his knees in earnest wrestling with God, that it was impossible for any man to be in his company without being influenced more or less by his holy life.

The example of a presiding elder with his young preachers is scarcely to be estimated. His style of sermonizing, his manner of delivery, and his habits of devotion, will all make an indelible impression upon the minds of those under his charge. How important then to the interests and continued prosperity of the church that he should be a man of the right stamp; a man of sound judgment, of deep personal piety, of studious habits, and of good preaching abilities. Such a man was the subject of this memoir. There was in him everything to check vanity and pride; everything to curb an indomitable and unholy ambition; everything to restrain extravagance of manner, foolish attempt at mere tinsel, in style, or rhetorical flourish in the delivery of a sermon; and yet everything to encourage diligent and patient study of the Holy Scriptures, and of the best theological works -- everything to urge one forward in the path of acquirement, and to prompt one to go on to the highest attainable point of excellence and usefulness in the ministry. Nothing to encourage idleness, or make a young man fold his arms, and rest satisfied with an humble mediocrity in the pulpit. Mr. Childs was careful to guard those under his care against every thing like mere display in the exhibition of gospel truth.

In his examination of candidates for the ministry, he was patient and thorough. An acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures he regarded as of the highest importance to the man entering upon the sacred vocation. He therefore always required plain texts in proof of the doctrines on which he examined, he gave prominence to the doctrines of justification by faith, regeneration, witness of the Spirit, and holiness or sanctification.

At the session of the Conference, on the examination of character, he was never extravagant in his representations of the talents and usefulness of his preachers; but always spoke with discrimination of each one's abilities, and other qualifications. Such men filling the office of presiding elder, must ever make it a powerful arm in the great machinery of Methodist Itinerancy.

We do not intend to intimate that he had no superiors; nor do we say that we have none equal to him; but we will say, would to God, we had more like him.

The author has spoken of Mr. Childs as presiding elder from his personal knowledge. He knows the things whereof he affirms.

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Returns to North Carolina for his family -- Goes to his circuit -- Letter to his wife -- Diary -- Circuit labor -- Visit to Albemarle circuit- -- Old friends -- Extracts from his diary -- Close of the year -- Attends Conference -- Anecdote -- Appointed to Amelia circuit -- Repairs To his appointment- -- Letter to Mr. Bass -- His own experience -- State of the circuit -- A subject that gave him trouble -- Letter -- Thinks of a transfer to another Conference -- Attends Conference -- Sent to Prince Edward circuit

On the adjournment of Conference, Mr. Childs returned to his family in Germantown, North Carolina, where he spent a few days in getting in readiness for his journey, and then proceeded, by convenient stages, with his wife and infant, to Lynchburg; where he left Mrs. Childs with her friends, and entered at once upon his work on the Amherst circuit.

The following letter, addressed to Mrs. C. while on his first round on his circuit, will be found interesting:--

Amherst Circuit, April 3d, 1835

My Dear Martha:-- Since leaving you, I have been quite indisposed; but have been able, however, to meet my appointments, and trust have been strengthened, in a peculiar way, both in body and in mind. I have been much comforted in my labor. The people seem affectionately to receive me, and I hope some good has been done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I feel well satisfied with the change from a district to a circuit -- seem to move in my proper element; but fear the friends in some places expect too much. What, however, cannot Divine grace do for us? My dear Martha, let us look up for more and more of it, that we may be wholesome patterns to all.

"April 6th. -- I enjoy much peace of mind -- more, I think, lately than for a great while -- perhaps more than ever before. Oh, my dear, let us arise and shake ourselves from the dust. There is a great work for us to perform; let us not be slothful in the performance, rather let us be patterns 'of all diligence and frugality that the gospel be not blamed.' Meantime, let us exercise that living faith in the merits of our blessed Redeemer, without which all our works are unacceptable to God. May we 'be found of him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of faith; that we may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death.'

The friends here inquire after you, and generally want to know whether I intend to bring you into the circuit. Come, my dear, a pattern of all plainness, that none of Christ's people may suffer hurt or damage by our bad example. Oh, how cautiously! how circumspectly should we walk, so as to please God in all things! I believe the Lord is renewing my strength, and that he will yet do great things by so poor an instrument. I rejoice that I seem to have that very work to do that suits my soul. Will you not pray that I may be faithful and successful in the discharge thereof? Come, my dear, you must hold up my hands by your prayers and supplications; and be well assured that I have you daily and almost hourly in remembrance before the throne of grace. Are you panting after all the mind that was in Christ? Can you say --

"Keep me dead to all below,  
Only Christ resolved to know;  
Firm, and disengaged, and free,  
Seeking all my bliss in Thee"?

My dear wife, this is possible, though you have a dear little Margaret and a husband to love and think of The Lord teach us the proper mean, and may we be sanctified wholly throughout spirit, soul, and body.

Tell Sister E. that I hope she will not faint or tire in her mind; but as ho who hath called her is holy, so may she be holy in all manner of conversation. Say to her, that God has lately loosed my bonds, and I do trust that I shall not give up the hope of a present deliverance from all inbred corruption. I trust we shall all yet see good days in the land of the living. If souls shall be saved and sanctified on this circuit, my highest wishes will all be realized. The Lord work with us, is my prayer, for Redeemer's sake.

I called to see a newly-married couple this morning, not of our church; and had to deal quite plainly with the lady. She appeared to take it well for the time, if it does not smart afterwards. Oh! how hard to tell every one under our care what we see wrong about them! But you may say she was not under my care. But she is an immortal being; and we should seek the profit of many that they may be saved.

Since I came into this circuit, a man has been snatched off in the strength of his years, who, only two hours before his death said, to one of our members, that if he could stay here always he wanted no better heaven. Alas! for the poor deluded mortal. Let us remember the Saviour's admonition, "Be ye also ready."

My love to our friends, with the largest portion for yourself and our dear little one.

I remain your affectionate husband,  
John W. Childs

April 29th he writes in his diary -- it is his last entry for nearly two months following -- "Our Lord has dealt very kindly with me of late. My soul has enjoyed much love, peace, and joy -- indeed, my enjoyments have been superior to any thing I have known heretofore. My affections more even, and my peace more abiding. O Jesus, grant me grace to abide in thee continually: even so, Amen. Bless my dear Martha and our little one."

June 17th he adds -- "The above has been, in the general, my experience. But oh! I want more love, more light, more zeal, more humility. Lord, give for Jesus' sake. Amen."

This is the last entry until the month of October. He almost entirely discontinued writing in his diary from this time; but, happily for us, his correspondence is abundant, and furnishes a very full history of his religious experience. From what we can gather, his mind seems to have been at rest and his soul constantly filled with the love of God. There can be no doubt that he had regained the state of Christian experience, even in a higher degree, for which he had so long and so

earnestly prayed, and which he says he enjoyed for several months while on the Buckingham circuit in 1832. But he still kept up his habits of early rising, private prayer, and reading the Scriptures, In these he never relaxed, until the end of his journey.

In writing to his old friend and brother in the gospel, the Rev. R. G. Bass, under date, May 9th, 1835, he says -- "My wife has just got to her home in the circuit, having remained with her sister, in Lynchburg, a month or two. We are well pleased with our field of labor, and hope God will give us to see the prosperity of Zion...

"What a searching question is that, 'Do you make a conscience of executing every part of your duty?' It is important, I am persuaded, that we reduce the size of our classes to something like the number recommended in the Discipline. This would increase the number of leaders, which would give employment to many persons whose talents are now buried or rusting out.

"What a work, the catechizing the children! Sabbath Schools cannot do our work: let us be workers together with them. Prayer-meetings should not be neglected, nor any thing that will quicken our people in the race of faith and love. I believe the Lord is deepening his work of grace in my soul, and hope that I shall see his glory yet before I depart hence and am seen no more among men."

From the last of October until about the first of January, Mr. Childs wrote almost daily in his diary; but there is very little that would interest the reader. His entries relate principally to church matters on his circuit, with occasional references to his religious exercises, which seem to have continued pretty much as he represents them to have been in the earlier part of the year.

In the month of November he promised to make a visit to his old friends in the Albemarle circuit; but something occurred that he supposed would cause a disappointment. To this he refers in a letter to his wife, dated November 2d:-- "It pleases me well that the disappointment takes place with regard to the Albemarle trip. I have had my doubts ever since I promised to go, whether it were the better way for me. I now feel myself under no further obligations to go, though I should be glad to see my old friends; yet the idea of neglecting my work is painful to me." In this letter he mentions that he had held some prosperous meetings in his circuit, at which a number had professed conversion; though no very extensive and general revival had prevailed. But, for what had been done, he thanked God, and took courage.

He made the trip to Albemarle, however, of which we find the following account in his diary:--

"Monday, 16th Nov. -- Started for an appointment in the Albemarle circuit -- lost my way; and after stumbling in the dark for some time, found myself at Bernley's Mill, near my old friend and acquaintance, William Goodman. In my wanderings the Lord was with me, and the darkness was not as great as I apprehended."

"Nov. 17th -- Started for Bingham's, through the rain -- did not get to the appointment. Preached at night -- surely God gave his blessing; but I fear no permanent good was done.



Preached on Wednesday, 17th. Friday returned home. I should say, upon the whole, my visit to Albemarle, I fear, was not according to the order of God."

Speaking of one of his village appointments, he says:-- "Here, some of the brethren have been going to the show and circus. We gave them an opportunity of confessing their sins to the church, and of promising amendment, -- some of them did so, frankly: others were disposed to offer apologies, and some remained in sullen silence. O Lord our God, work for thine own glory, and by thy Convincing Spirit blow upon every heart, that the chaff of sin -- the accursed thing -- may be destroyed."

December 1st, in writing to his wife, he says:

"I see the necessity of trampling the glory of this world under our feet, yet more and more. May the good Lord help us in this work of faith, 'patience of hope, and labor of love.' My dear Martha, I exhort you to be firm. All your grace will be tried. 'Beware, lest you also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.' Your husband sees but one way to heaven, and that the way of the cross! Oh! let us bear this, and all shall be ours. I feel that God is with me, but I desire a deeper communion with him -- yea, closer 'fellowship with the Father and the Son.'"

Mr. Childs continued to fill his appointments until it was time for him to leave for Conference. The year had not been as prosperous as he had hoped, and prayed it might be; and yet he had cause to thank God that he had not labored in vain. The church was evidently built up under his pastoral care; and, although the additions were not very numerous, he left the circuit in a healthy condition, and with its forces well organized to push the battle of God to the gates of the enemy.

He attended the Conference which held its session in the city of Norfolk, February 1836. The author remembers to have taken tea with him at his brother's (Capt. William Childs), with a large company of preachers, and other friends, among whom was the Rev. R. G. Bass. These brethren gave the conversation a very spiritual turn; and when the waiters came in with the tea, and the company were beginning to partake, Mr. Childs stopped them, by quoting the remark of the pious Payson on a similar occasion:-- "I wonder what devil invented a walking supper, to cheat the Lord out of grace." There was of course a pause, whereupon he requested Mr. Bass to ask a blessing, which he did, and the company proceeded with their tea.

From this Conference Mr. Childs was assigned to the Amelia circuit, lying between the James and Appomattox rivers, and about equidistant from the city of Richmond and the town of Petersburg.

Amelia Circuit, 1836

On the Amelia circuit Mr. Childs displayed the same zeal and fidelity in the prosecution of his high vocation, that had marked his ministerial life on other appointments. He boarded during the year with Mr. Gustavus A. Muir, of whose family he speaks in the highest terms. Mrs. Childs' health was feeble, and as he was necessarily absent from her the greater part of his time, he very

highly appreciated the kindness and attentions which they showed to her; and he took frequent occasion in his correspondence to record his grateful remembrance of the Christian and courteous hospitality received at their hands.

His labors were successful. In the early part of the year he records, with devout thanksgivings to God, the conversion of souls, under his ministry. He found it necessary to execute discipline in some of the societies. This was painful to him; and yet he did it with his accustomed firmness, keeping the fear of God before his eyes, in this most delicate and tender operation.

In redemption of a promise previously made, and for the recruiting of the enfeebled health of his wife, he made a trip to Tennessee, on a visit to Mrs. Childs' relations. This trip occupied several weeks; and on his return to his circuit he wrote to his friend, the Rev. Mr. Bass, in which he makes some mention of this tour. And as the letter contains several things of interest, relating to the portion of his life now under notice, we will lay it before the reader.

Amelia Circuit, August 25th, 1836

Dear Brother Bass:-- I was pleased to hear from you, and hope that this will find you still holding fast the sure foundation, and endeavoring to build thereupon "gold, silver, and precious stones."

I see, more than ever, the necessity of exercising a wholesome discipline in the church, separating the idle and careless from among us. Oh! my brother, be steady and courageous in this work, and God will bless your labors. We are not what we formerly were. What is the cause? We have slackened the reins of discipline almost altogether. By his assistance, I purpose amending from this very hour. I find that opposition comes down like a hurricane; but you know, after a storm there is usually a calm, -- so it is not the dead sea of Laodicean formality, I shall rejoice. God, I believe, is at work, healing divisions among us -- uniting the hearts of local and traveling ministers -- the hearts of the faithful are encouraged -- the chaff, I think will be blown off; and I hope a glorious revival of religion will take place. Let us fast, pray, and groan for it, that God may redeem Israel from all iniquity. Even so. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus...

I would advise you to stand fast to your Bible, and inquire for the old paths -- the good way, that you may walk therein. The days are coming to try men's souls, and those only who are approved will stand. God grant that you and I may be of that number -- nothing but grace -- the power of Christ can sustain us.

I think I can say that I am growing in grace -- that my purpose is to sell all and follow Christ -- to count all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge.

In my late tour I had many heavy conflicts with the enemy of my soul. I know not that I conquered in every trial; but blessed be God, one thing he gave, for which I rejoice, a resolution not to yield though beaten. The truth is, I believe a different plan should have been adopted by us -- it should have been a preaching journey. The thought of one's going seven or eight hundred miles, and only preaching on the Sabbath, whose commission is to 'go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,' is painful to me, -- there is an inconsistency in it; but it is past; and I

bless the Lord that we are returned in peace, and through his mercy I feel like engaging afresh in the great work -- the work of the Lord. Oh! for an humbler heart, and a louder song of praise and gratitude to God for his ten thousand mercies.

We have had some souls converted on the circuit. We must root up, and plant. This was the commission given to Jeremiah the prophet, and I apprehend, to every gospel minister.

Let us cleave closer to Jesus, and abide in him; in his doctrine, in his example, in his atoning blood, and above all in his spirit. Oh! that the mind that was in Christ may be found in us. Nothing short of this will prepare us for an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. May we be ready to meet him With joy.

Believe me, yours affectionately,  
John W. Childs

About the same time that he wrote the above he addressed a letter also to his Lynchburg correspondent, from which we make the following extract.

"I think God is renewing my soul in righteousness. I have been benefited by reading, lately, selections from Mr. Wesley's works, by Rev. John Hersey; and also the life of De Renty, and an address to the clergy by Mr. Law. All have been rendered a blessing to me. God is confirming me in those views so often expressed to you; and I am in confident hope that I shall see the full salvation on earth, and then enjoy it above.

"I would exhort you to take full possession of the promised land -- the Canaan of perfect love. The way of self-denial is the high road to it, and God will give it to all that seek earnestly.

"Brother Adams, my colleague, has had some revival under his ministry on the circuit. -- About twenty were converted a few days before we arrived. Divine power seems to attend the word. The hearts of many appear to be quickened. Much discipline to be attended to. May God strengthen us ... The friends are very kind to us -- a thousand times more so than we deserve. My health is greatly improved since returning to the circuit."

The above letters pretty fairly indicate the state of Mr. Childs' mind, his religious experience, and the condition of the church on the Amelia circuit at the time of which we are now writing.

There was one subject, however, in relation to which he spoke but little, except with confidential friends, which was a source of considerable anxiety to him at this time, and which exerted a great influence upon all his plans for the future exercise of his ministry.

Mr. Childs was a great friend of the slaves and free people of color in our country. He availed himself of every opportunity to instruct them in the plan of salvation, and to preach the gospel to them. He was friendly to the Colonization Society; and looked upon the efforts making to settle a colony of well instructed colored people upon the shores of Africa as the most likely means of extending the blessings of the glorious gospel to the savages of the interior of that great

continent. He took occasion therefore to advocate the claims of the Colonization Society, and to turn the attention of such persons as were likely to be benefited by a removal to Liberia to the subject of emigration. In this matter he seems sometimes to have been misapprehended, -- his motives were impugned; and his friendship for the Colonization cause was construed into a kind of abolitionism; and this led to remarks and surmises that were not the most agreeable to him. The fact is, Mr. Childs felt that there was an impediment to the full and satisfactory discharge of his ministerial function towards this portion of our population, and he began seriously to meditate a removal to a state in which no such impediment, as he believed, existed. To this he refers in the following letter.

Amelia Circuit, Va. Conference, October 31st, 1836

My Dear Sister:-- I was sorry to hear of your afflictions. If the Lord chastens you sore, we pray, if it be best, that none of you may be delivered over to death. His will, in all things, should be embraced as best for us. The readiest way to get rid of afflictions, Mr. Wesley says, is "to be willing to bear them as long as God sees fit to send them." I know it requires no small portion of grace to do this; but there is quite a sufficiency in the wounds of Jesus, and I suppose the reason why we are not armed for every trial is because we forget "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ." "Without me," says the blessed Saviour, "ye can do nothing," and how often do we find the truth of this declaration. But a believing look to Jesus will frequently put all our foes to flight. Oh! may you and I be able to look until his blood makes us perfect. Let us not dare to doubt of its virtue; even today, he offers to make us every whit whole. Lord, what are we waiting for? Jesus, master, speak but the word and the work shall be done. I sincerely pray that God may be with you of a truth, and that his light may continually shine upon your tabernacle.

And, my dear sister, among other things, try to pay special attention to the children. Much devolves upon you in this important department of usefulness. "Train them up in the way they should go," and God will certainly bless your efforts, and give additional comfort to your own soul.

I more and more see that the world lieth in wickedness, and trust, through grace, that I have gained some victories over it since we parted; but I am far, very far deficient yet. But I feel God is with me, unworthy as I am, and my purpose still is "to know nothing but Jesus, and him crucified!"

Since returning from the west, I have again had my difficulties on the old subject -- one that we have frequently conversed about ... We have been strongly exercised about going to a different section. I pray that the great Head of the church may direct us.

I see in a measure the necessity of self-denial, and bearing our daily cross; but oh! how nature revolts. If, however, the prize would be obtained, offending nature must be bound to the cross of the Saviour. Lord, help us to understand this doctrine, and help us to practice it constantly.

We are not doing a great deal here in the church. We are trying to purge out the old leaven. What wisdom is necessary to do this effectually, and yet mildly...

And now may God, only wise, be with you, and he your portion for ever, is the prayer of your affectionate friend and brother,

John W. Childs

In addition to the "old difficulties," alluded to above, there were others, growing out of some unfortunate controversies in the Conference to which he belonged, that led Mr. Childs to look to some other section of the work as the future field for the exercise of his ministry. The unsettled state of his mind, at this time, doubtless interfered with the success of his labors. There was no extensive revival of religion on his circuit, though the church was greatly edified, and its permanent prosperity promoted by his ministry and pastoral oversight.

His closing labors on the circuit were interrupted by a protracted and severe attack of illness which befell Mrs. Childs, and from which she barely recovered. During the more critical part of her sickness his time was necessarily occupied with her, and he was therefore unable to pay that attention to his appointments which under other circumstances he would have done. Writing to his friend, Jan. 16th, 1837, he uses the following language in reference to this affliction.

"We have a thousand reasons to return thanks to God that Martha's life is spared, and that she is able to go about her room. We feel filled with gratitude for the concern manifested in your letter for her welfare; and as the Lord first requires a ready mind, and it is then acceptable according to what we have, and not according to what we have not; no doubt but with him the will, will be taken for the deed, and consequently you will not lose your reward. I pray this may be so.

"Not much doing on the circuit. I had filled my appointments for several weeks until last Saturday, when I was prevented by the inclemency of the weather. So last Sabbath was spent at Brother Muir's, the brother with whom we board, and I hope not in vain. We called the colored people and family together, and tried to speak to them; and nearly if not all were bathed in tears.

"Our friends here have been truly kind to us, during the day of our affliction. The physicians attended her day and night, with every mark of respect and affection, gratis, and the neighbors came in timely to the assistance of the family. Sister T., Sister B. &c., assisted. May the Lord reward all for their kindness."

In the letter from which the above extract is made, he again speaks of the probability of his obtaining a transfer, at the ensuing session of the Conference, to some other portion of his Master's vineyard. And yet he appears undetermined as to what course he would adopt. In reference to this he says, "Our thoughts lead us in the same direction as mentioned some time since. Oh! may the great Head of the church guide us aright in this, and every other matter." He then adds, "My progress in the Divine life is not as swift as I could desire. Somewhat faint at times, though still pursuing."

It is obvious from Mr. Childs' correspondence, at this time, that he was not content with his position; but we must wait for future developments to furnish a more satisfactory explanation of this state of his mind.

He closed his year's labors on the Amelia circuit, and went up to the Conference held in the month of February 1837, in the town of Petersburg, Virginia. From this Conference he was appointed to the Prince Edward circuit, lying between the towns of Petersburg and Lynchburg.

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## Chapter 12

### PRINCE EDWARD CIRCUIT 1837-38

Failure to get a transfer -- Reception on his circuit -- Fall from his horse -- Injury -- How he bears it -- Confined several weeks -- Diary -- Letters -- Great revival commences -- Anecdote -- Always about his Master's work -- Attends Conference -- Returned to Prince Edward circuit -- Letter to Mr. Bass -- Religious experience unsatisfactory To himself -- Year closes -- Mr. Bass' death -- Detained from Conference -- Mr. Redd's recollections of Mr. Childs -- Appointed to the Bedford circuit

Immediately on the adjournment of Conference, Mr. Childs wrote a letter to his friend in Lynchburg, in which he speaks of his failure to obtain the transfer desired, and quietly acquiesces in what seemed to be the order of Providence in reference to his appointment. We make a single extract from this letter, which will answer our purpose in this connection.

"I have just returned from a tedious Conference, where much was done and said that I judge had better not have been performed. In accordance with my former suggestion, I asked for a transfer; but there were difficulties in getting it in the direction I wished to go. The Bishop's advice to me, was to stay here a year longer, which I was disposed to do, as the providential way seemed not yet to be open. In the matter of my appointment, I endeavored to leave it all in the hands of our kind heavenly Father, being willing to go wherever the providence of God might appoint.

"Our lot, as you doubtless have heard, has come out for Prince Edward circuit. Oh, may the Lord give us favor and success in the eyes of the people! Though. Find it is really good for my soul to be despised, to be neglected, to be 'little and unknown, prized and loved by God alone.' It is good for the healing of the distemper that I naturally labour under. I mean pride, and vain glory. If this were only cured, I doubt not that every grace, and every virtue, would appear in due time.

"I see, sister E., more and more, that holy tempers, the mind which was in Christ, is the very thing which we neglect; while shadows and phantoms are eagerly sought after; honor, admiration, and the esteem of men are vehemently pursued."

Mr. Childs had a great many friends and acquaintances on the Prince Edward circuit, and he received a most cordial welcome when he entered upon his work. Just after his arrival on the circuit, and before his family was settled for the year, he writes; "My prayer is that our coming may be made a blessing. I pray that the Lord would correct whatever is amiss in me, and prepare me unto every good word and work. He alone can sustain and preserve me. May he give me a right judgment in all things, that I may yet be rendered useful. To live without advancing the cause for which the Saviour bled, is painful indeed. I am frequently made to cry out, 'I would not live

always.' There is so much strife, commotion, and confusion in the world, it is enough to make us say,

'Who, who would live away, away from his God,  
Away from yen heaven, that blissful abode?'

May the Lord prepare me for its enjoyment, and give me grace to say, while in this world,

'Give joy or grief, give ease or pain,  
Take life or friends away;  
But let me find them all again,  
In that eternal day.'"

Mr. Childs succeeded, at an early day, in getting his family comfortably located on the circuit, in the family of his esteemed friend, John W. Redd. His mind was then at rest, and he felt prepared to enter on his regular work, with a good heart, and an humble trust in God for success in his labors. But on returning from his first appointment, he was suddenly arrested by a casualty that laid him up for six weeks. His horse took fright, and ran away with him, and threw him with such violence as to fracture his shoulder. In this condition he was taken to a neighboring house, where medical aid was called in, and every thing was done that kindness could device to alleviate his sufferings, and hasten his recovery. In about ten days he was removed to Mr. Redd's, where he gradually grew better, until he was able again to recommence his appointments. He seems not to have been moved by this affliction; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. When he had so far recovered, as to be able to use his arm, he made the following entry in his diary.

"March 6th, 1837 -- My horse took fright on the afternoon of this date, and after running some short distance threw me, and as it has been supposed, broke my shoulder near the joint. Oh Lord, how unsearchable are thy judgments! Yet Lord, I bow, and acknowledge thee just. Oh, lead me and teach me! This affliction has confined me from preaching six weeks, with the exception of two sermons preached at my lodgings at Bro. John W. Redd's."

Mr. Redd thus speaks of him during the period of his confinement in his house, from this accident. "He conversed with everyone who visited him, on the subject of religion; and no doubt was, during the time of his confinement, instrumental in preparing the way for the glorious revival of religion, which began almost immediately after he got about his work. Indeed, he was about his Master's work all the time of his detention from his stated appointments. He was visited by a great many persons, and he never parted with any of them without prayer; taking occasion to converse with each one on personal religion, and giving such advice as each one's case seemed to require. These conversations made a deep and lasting impression upon the, minds of Christians and sinners. There was something in his manner and spirit, that seemed so clearly to evince the power of religion, that it was impossible not to feel the force of what he said. And while his friends were fearful he never would use his arm again, he gave up all into the hands of God, and set his mind upon the work of saving souls.

"While he was confined, he took medicine for the improvement of his general health, and he rapidly gained in flesh, and improved in complexion; and when he was so far recovered as to

commence preaching again, he looked better than I ever saw him. During the whole time, he was very cheerful, and when he began to use his arm, he was devoutly thankful."

To his Lynchburg correspondents he thus writes in relation to this affliction:

April 3d, 1837

My Dear Sister:-- How mysterious are the ways of Providence! You have doubtless heard, 'ere the presents of the dealings of an all-wise God with me. I desire to bow to his authority, and humble myself in dust and ashes before him; and if it shall be made the means, in any degree, of improving my condition, spiritually or temporally, I shall say with David, "It is good for me to have been afflicted." This is the fourth time I have attempted to write since my fall. Oh! how thankful should I be that God has permitted me thus far to recover my strength; though it is yet somewhat doubtful with me whether I shall again have the free use of my arm and shoulder. I now know by experience what it is for the "right hand to forget her cunning." O help me to pray that I may not be blind to the intentions of a wise Providence. He has surely been with me in my afflictions. Oh, that I could suitably praise him for temporal and spiritual blessings! Oh, when shall I sink to perfection's height, the depth of humble love! Lord hasten the time.

April 6th -- Praise to our God! my shoulder and arm continue to strengthen, and I hope my general health improves. Let us firmly rest in God, and in all our ways acknowledge him; believing if health be best for us he will give it to us; if otherwise, let us say, "The will of the Lord be done."

Yours affectionately,  
John W. Childs

To the same he writes:--

May 3d, 1831

My Dear Sister:-- Our first quarterly meeting is over; but it was not convenient for me to attend in consequence of my affliction. I hear, however, that there was quite an interesting time. We are anxiously longing and looking for the conversion of souls, and hope we shall not be disappointed. God has promised that his "glory shall fill the earth," and, I verily believe, if we live and pray as we should, it will take place. "Ye that make mention of the Lord," saith the prophet, "give him no rest." Oh! let us then be instant in season and out of season, and he will accomplish what he has promised. I hope you are in vigorous stretch for the land of Canaan. "What is there here that deserves our joys?" The world is all a delusive dream -- nay, a cheat; let us then put it down, and keep it completely under our feet. Jesus is surely able to do all things for us; and if we will take his easy yoke upon us, we shall most assuredly find rest to our souls. I bless the Lord for my affliction, and believe it has been of real service to me. Oh! may he give me wisdom to reap the full benefit therefrom.

Yours truly,  
John W. Childs



When Mr. Childs was able at last to travel round his circuit and meet his appointments, he came to his people "in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

He seemed better prepared for his ministerial labors, bodily and spiritually, than before his afflictions. The word of God dispensed by him was now attended by an unusual Divine energy, and the work of revival commenced with tremendous power. It spread from appointment to appointment, until the whole circuit was brought under its delightful influence. This gracious work revived the heart and enlisted all the energies of Mr. Childs. He labored from morning till night, and from house to house, and wherever he went souls were converted to God. At the second quarterly meeting held for the circuit, in the month of July, "between sixty and seventy," he says, professed conversion. The week following, he adds -- "The Lord broke in upon a company of school children that attended our services, and seven were converted; and, the Sabbath following, two more of the same school."

From this time, he seems to have been a new man in some respects. He was evidently better satisfied with his position and field of labour, and seemed to think that God had given his sanction to his ministry. The revival increased; and, during the year, it is believed not less than five hundred souls were converted. In the month of September, at the third quarterly meeting for the circuit, held by the lamented Dr. Abram Penn, who was presiding elder of the district, a powerful work broke out in a neighborhood which, up to that time, had remained cold and unmoved. The community were wealthy and worldly-minded, and but few in the neighborhood were pious. But God sent his Spirit upon them, and their hearts turned to him as the streams of the south. It was like life from the dead. One wealthy, thoughtless sinner who lived in this neighborhood, hearing of the appointment for a protracted meeting to be held at the church, which was but a mile or two from his residence, remarked, that he had heard for some time of the revival that was going on the county; and that he supposed the preachers were going to move it close to him; and, if they did, he intended to get converted. This he said in a jest; but it turned out to be true. He was among the first who were cut to the heart, and one of the first to bear his testimony that God for Christ's sake had pardoned his sins; and no one was more active or more successful than he, during the revival, in leading the sinners of that neighborhood to the foot, of the cross.

There were large accessions to the church during the progress of this good work of grace on the circuit; and in every neighborhood Mr. Childs was beloved and venerated for his piety and works' sake. He still continued the same conscientious, scrupulous Christian that we have seen him in previous years of his ministry.

In the town of Farmville, which was then included in the Prince Edward circuit, there was a most extensive revival and a very, large addition to the church. Mr. Childs participated largely in the labors of this meeting; and the young converts and church members, as a token of their regard for Mr. Childs personally, and as an expression of their high appreciation of his services among them, presented him with a costly suit of clothes, which he declined accepting; assigning as the reason for declining, that he could not consent to wear so fine a suit of clothes himself, though a present, while he felt called on, as a faithful minister of the New Testament, to preach against extravagance and costliness of apparel. He consented to receive a present of equal value in some other form; but he could not be induced to wear a fine and expensive coat. The revival continued until the approach of winter.

November 23d, 1887, he writes to a friend: "The work of the Lord still goes on in some parts of our circuit, though not so swiftly. Those parts that appeared barren in the first part of the year, now seem to be visited. May the Holy Spirit give us wisdom to lead the people in the right path.

"We are still at brother Redd's. Some of the servants have professed religion, and all, perhaps, that are grown are inquiring the way."

Mr. Childs always made it a point to instruct the children and servants in the families where he visited; and he never seemed content while any member of the family remained unconverted. The good Lord only knows how many were led to the Saviour by the private admonitions, and godly instructions of this holy minister of Jesus Christ. He was always about his master's work. He permitted no day to pass without an effort to save a soul. He was not content to preach so many sermons, lead so many classes, and formally to visit a few families in his charge; but with a heart deeply impressed with the importance of his mission, he was instant in season, out of season; and everywhere, by day and by night, and, "from house to house," he was engaged in warning sinners, and leading inquirers to Jesus. He closed his labors for the year; and from the Conference, held February 1838, in the city of Richmond, he was returned to the Prince Edward circuit for the ensuing year. This was gratifying to himself and to the circuit. Indeed, at that time, no one could have supplied his place. He was early at his appointments, vigilantly attending to the young converts, and training them up for usefulness in the church. He watched over them with a father's care, and was ever ready to solve their doubts, to sympathize with them under sore temptations, and guide their feet into the paths of righteousness.

During the severity of the winter but little could be done in preaching at the regular appointments; but he took care to supply this lack of public service by holding prayer meetings in private houses; and availing himself of all suitable opportunities of instructing the families as he visited among his people. His influence was powerfully felt upon the whole community. It was not confined to his own church, but other denominations flocked to hear him preach, and acknowledged the influence of his example, and of his heart-searching manner of expounding the Scriptures, in leading them to a closer walk with Christ, and to greater circumspection of conduct in their daily deportment.

April 7th 1838, he writes: "This day I have completed the first regular round on the circuit, and desire to praise the Lord for his assisting grace. We have seen no uncommon displays of divine goodness, but many I hope are endeavoring to put on the whole armor of God; and, perhaps, with few exceptions, all are pleased with our return. I feel encouraged, from the consideration that no steps were taken on my part to procure it. May the Lord grant that our second coming may be made a blessing. I feel truly thankful that the good Lord has so far permitted me to pass without a similar affliction to the one that befell me last year. Oh! may I be more grateful to him than heretofore. It is with fear and trembling that I commence the labors of this circuit for another year; and but for the consciousness that it was not my own procuring, my hands would hang down. May we not be as 'salt that has lost its savor.' My soul still follows hard after the Lord, though I am perfectly ashamed of my many inconsistencies. I believe there is no other way to heaven for me

than through the crucifixion of the flesh. May the Lord give me strength that I may hold on my way, and not faint or be discouraged. I would be by myself abhorred, and give all glory to God."

Shortly after the above he wrote to his friend, the Rev. R. G. Bass, who was at that time traveling the Greensville circuits where they had, a few years previous, labored together. We give the letter entire.

Prince Edward Circuits April 23, 1838

Dear Brother Bass:-- I hope this may find you and yours well, and in the enjoyment of the life of God in your souls. Oh! may he be with you to do you good, both for time and for eternity. Through his amazing mercy we are still alive, and endeavoring 'through faith and patience to inherit the promises;' we are likewise trying to scatter the seeds of the word of life among our perishing fellow creatures. Oh! may he who multiplied the loaves and fishes, multiply the seed sown, and abundantly increase the fruits of righteousness. My health is tolerably good, and also the health of our people. We have seen some tokens for good, and pray that it may be but the promise of an abundant shower. I hope sincerely that the good Lord is opening your mouth to speak his word boldly, as we ought to speak; and that you may have good and glorious times on your circuit this year.

Oh! brother B.,

'Let us stir each other up,  
Our faith by works to approve;  
By holy, purifying hope,  
And the sweet task of love.'

My soul desires more and more of the image of God. Oh! may he stamp me with his Holy Spirit's seal. I trust you are hungering and thirsting after righteousness; and that sister B. is pressing on with you in the same heavenly course. Please let me hear how you are progressing? What the Lord is doing in you, by you, and through you? Remember me affectionately to our old companions in tribulation. May the Lord be with them and abundantly bless them, and help them on their journey to heaven. I would name some, but forbear lest others should think themselves slighted. May the choicest blessings of heaven rest upon you.

Affectionately yours in Christ,  
John W. Childs

To the same, Mr. Childs writes, July 3d, 1838: "At some places on the circuit there is yet some interest, and we are trying to enforce discipline; but I fear that 'iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold.' Much of the cause of this state of things, I fear, exists in myself. Oh! what a poor inconstant worm am I. No: I have not faithfully and patiently borne the cross, but have shamefully turned to some things, from which God had wholly delivered me, as though there were some real good in the poor toys of time and sense -- such as are calculated to please the eyes of poor mortals. If, after we have escaped the pollutions of the world by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, we are again entangled and overcome, the last end is worse than the first. Pray

brother B. that this may not be my case; but that through grace I may obtain the victory and follow it up until 'glory crown what grace began.' God is, however, still with me, I trust, in the midst of all my unfaithfulness. I feel that he deals kindly with me; far more than I deserve ... If we are not exceedingly careful, our hearts are prone to betray us into an improper compliance with the customs of the age in which we live. May the Lord preserve us by his grace. I thank you for the suggestion in relation to this subject; and beseech you to deal plainly with me. 'Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.' I hope my heart says to God and man, 'Search me and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'" As the summer advanced there were some seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord on various parts of the circuit, and a considerable number of persons professed conversion, and were added to the church. But while Mr. Childs was earnestly engaged in trying to lead sinners to Christ, and to build up the Church of God, he did not neglect his personal salvation. He was ever watchful over himself; and constantly laboring to obtain and maintain all the mind that was in Christ.

September 14th, 1838, he writes to his Lynchburg correspondent as follows:-- "Since we parted, I have been reading again Mr. Wesley on Christian Perfection. I discover my deficiency; but believe from the marks he lays down that I have enjoyed the blessing; and am determined by grace to amend my ways and my doings."

Mr. Childs' Christian experience seems to have been strangely unsatisfactory to himself at this time. Something hidden was constantly troubling him, and interrupting his enjoyments. He had not wholly abandoned his contemplated transfer to another Conference, and yet the providential indications to his own mind did not fully warrant such a step at that time. He was evidently dissatisfied, and still he was at a loss what course to pursue. This unsettled state of mind interfered very materially with his spiritual comforts. At one time we find him, apparently, wholly swallowed up in the will of God -- calmly sitting at the feet of Jesus, and happy in his work. Again, we meet him under a cloud of providential darkness, "having no light;" but still "trusting in the name of the Lord, and staying upon his God," and yet writing most severe and bitter things against himself. Hear, him in a letter addressed to the same person to whom the last quoted was written:-- "I have had fightings without and fears within, since you left, but I know that God is faithful, and to him I look, through Jesus Christ. My unfaithfulness, I know, has been very great; my inconsistency, oh! I am ashamed of it. Sometimes I fear, like Moses, I have angered the Lord, and that he will not do any great things by me or for me. Yet I know it is of His mercy that I am not dead -- that I am not damned -- that I still live, surrounded with so many mercies. I am a monster in creation. Oh I that I could experience more of his goodness and his greatness. Unless God come and dwell in my heart, more and more, I know that I cannot glorify him, or do anything that is good. Oh! that he would make my longing heart his home; not only occasionally, but constantly. Oh! where is the Lord God of Elijah? ... I see there is but one way -- to be crucified with Christ -- to have the old man nailed to the cross. May I cheerfully submit to it, that the fruits of the Spirit may be mine for ever."

How strange it seems that a man of such extraordinary piety and devotion to God, should have been the subject of such painful exercises! We wonder that his comforts were not always abounding, -- that his joy was not like a perennial spring, sending its refreshing waters over his soul, -- that his peace was not constantly like a river, and his righteousness as the waves of the sea.

The probability is, that some constitutional cause had much to do in producing this effect. Mr. Childs certainly was never more devout, more zealous for souls, more faithful in his ministry, or more godly in all manner of conversation, so far as his most intimate friends could judge, than at the very time he represents himself to have been the subject of these conflicting and distressing mental and spiritual exercises.

As the year drew to a close he began to hesitate as to whether he would attend the session of the Conference. The two preceding sessions were not the most harmonious and pleasant, and he feared that the peace of the approaching session might be interrupted as the former had been, and concluded that he would act the part of the prudent man who, foreseeing the evil, hides himself. Besides, his friend and brother beloved in Christ, the Rev. Rowland G. Bass, had died, and he had been requested to preach his funeral sermon; and he thought that he could better employ his time in attending to this last expression of regard for the memory of his departed brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," than in attending the Conference. He therefore declined, though not without some misgivings as to whether it were the better course. To the friend, so frequently alluded to in the preceding part of this work, he writes --

February 15th, 1839

You will perceive by the date of this that my lot is not to go to Conference this year; though I begin almost to suspect that the better way is to go, upon the whole. We should most gladly avail ourselves of this opportunity to visit you; but circumstances render it inconvenient at the present time, as my engagements for the Sabbaths will lead me in a different direction.

"For the present my mind leads me to remain in this region of country. If the Lord call me to go, he will open the way. Pray that in every thing I may clear my skirts of the blood of my fellow creatures. Even so, Amen.

"I thank you for your care with regard to our destiny for another year. May the good Lord direct us to that place where we may do, and get the most good. I long to be useful. I long to bring souls to God, and to build up believers in their most holy faith. But who is sufficient for these things? Divine grace alone can qualify. May the Great Head of the Church give us more spirituality."

During the two years which Mr. Childs spent on the Prince Edward circuit, he boarded with John W. Redd; and in his correspondence he very frequently speaks of the kindness and untiring attention of this Christian gentleman and his estimable lady, towards himself and family. He seems to have become strongly attached to Mr. Redd and his whole household; and it was not without painful emotions that he parted with them at the close of his term of service on the circuit. Mr. Redd became as intimately acquainted with Mr. Childs, perhaps, as any man ever did. He was a great deal in his company, in public and in private, and had every opportunity of forming a correct estimate of the man. We take pleasure, therefore, in laying before the reader the following extract from a communication addressed to us by Mr. Redd, in which he gives us his impressions of Mr. Childs, as a minister of Jesus Christ; a Christian, and a friend.

"He boarded with me two years, during the whole of which time he set the most holy and godly example that I ever witnessed; so that when I speak of him I hardly know where to begin. In his intercourse with families, as a pastor, he was mild and persuasive; continually endeavoring to impress on all, the necessity of a life wholly devoted to the service of God. Indeed, it seemed to be his object to do all the good he possibly could to all men; every day, practically forgetting the things which were behind, and reaching to those before. I never saw any thing harsh or unkind in any word or act coming from him; and although he was prompt to reprove sin whenever he saw an occasion for reproof; yet he was always kind and affectionate to the sinner, always putting the most favorable construction on the act he could, having the charity which 'believeth all things.'

"He was the farthest from egotism or self-applause of anyone I ever knew; hardly ever speaking of himself; or of his instrumentality in the many conversions with which his labors were blessed. While he was with us, on the Prince Edward circuit, he had, in the year 1837, not less than five hundred converts, and yet he did not report near so many, seeming to fear that he might give too large a number. He was always willing that others might be preferred before him, and that he might be little and unknown. Indeed, he was, without doubt, the most perfect model of humility I ever saw.

"I believe he used to rise invariably at four o'clock in the morning, and spend much time in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and meditation. He was very studious, trying to redeem the time in every possible way. He had no idle moment, or any time for frivolity, or idle chit-chat; but was always ready to converse with anyone on any useful or practical subject, either of a temporal or spiritual nature. He was very accessible, and easy of approach to anyone who wished to converse with him. He was a most agreeable companion, always enjoying whatever was either good or useful in nature or art. He was very temperate in eating, as well as in everything else; but truly thankful for the good things of life with which he was blessed. He was a great admirer of neatness and order, and liked the saying, 'neatness is next to godliness.' If he saw anything wrong in anyone, he would never speak of it to any other person; but he would be sure to take the earliest opportunity to speak with the person himself; and show him, in the most earnest and affectionate manner, the evil of his way, and encourage him to pursue a different course.

"I have seen him, when diverted, laugh heartily, but never immoderately -- his moderation was shown in all things.

"He was careful not to give offense, or wound the feelings of any one; but firm to do his whole duty, as one who had the charge of souls, and must give his account to God. He labored so that he might be clear from the blood of all, and win all that he could to Christ. In a word, he was the most perfect Christian I ever knew.

"I could say more, but deem it unnecessary."

This is a noble testimony from one who knew him well.

The Conference was held in the town of Edenton, North Carolina, from which he was assigned to the Bedford circuit, west of Lynchburg, lying along the base of the Blue Ridge mountains, and embracing a wild and romantic section of Virginia. In this field of labor -- among

these hills and valleys, and skirting these mountains, we shall pursue his life in the next chapter of his interesting and instructive history.

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### Chapter 13

#### BEDFORD CIRCUIT -- 1839

Goes to the circuit -- Letter to his wife -- Troubled again upon the "old subject" -- Letter explanatory of his course -- Afflictions -- His ministry not crowned with great success -- Closes the year -- Goes to Conference -- Assigned to the Chesterfield circuit

As soon as Mr. Childs received intelligence that he had been assigned to the Bedford circuit for the year 1839, he set out without delay for his appointment. On his way he spent a short time with his friends in Lynchburg, where he left his wife and children to spend a few weeks with their relations, in the family of the Rev. Early. His new charge received him cordially, and immediately went to work to fit up the parsonage, located in the pleasant little village of Liberty, for the accommodation of his family.

To his wife he writes, March 20th, "I am now in the parsonage, writing; and feel thankful to God that the people have provided such a place of rest for us. I feel delighted; and only want you and the little ones here to make all well so far as this world is concerned. I find upon examination that there is nearly or quite everything we need in the parsonage. How wise the caution, 'be careful for nothing.'

"I am anxious to see you. I think I love you as well as I dare love a mortal. I know I love you above all created beings. I would except the body of our Saviour; though St. Paul says, 'henceforth know we him no more after the flesh.' Kiss the dear little ones for me; and try to teach them the way to heaven."

March 26th, he again writes to the same; in which, after giving directions in reference to some household affairs, he says, "O my dear, let us remember it is written, 'they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh,' and they that are after the spirit, the things of the Spirit. May we be found thinking of following after, and relishing the things of the Spirit; and only follow the things of this world so far as they are really necessary to gain a better; you may rely upon it, that is our true country. May we be found continually in a state of preparation for it ... Have our dear little Mary baptized before you leave Lynchburg. I trust I have offered her up to God in faith and prayer before this; and that is only the outward sign of nobler things."

April 15th, in writing to a friend, he says, "As yet we have witnessed no extraordinary manifestations of divine power on the circuit, farther than one conversion and a few mourners, and some seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The members here, say they have strong faith; may the good Lord give the wished increase. The matter of purging the church is all important. I fear it requires more skill than I possess. Oh, may the Lord give ability."

Mr. Childs became very greatly concerned upon the subject of walking and preaching again; and in opposition to the wishes and earnest remonstrances and expostulations of his nearest friends he left his horse, and commenced traveling on foot around his circuit. In a short time after recommencing this mode of traveling he received a letter of remonstrance from his particular friend, Mrs. E., of Lynchburg; to which he replied, in the same spirit of meekness and docility that distinguished his whole life. From this reply we copy the following.

Liberty, May 21, 1839

Dear Sister E.:-- In reference to the step taken by me, to which you allude, I have to say, -- if I know my own heart -- to please God -- to keep a good conscience -- to be more conformable to the image of Christ, are some of the principal reasons by which I have been influenced. To be less burdensome, and to have an opportunity of visiting more, are some of the secondary considerations, that have led me to this course. I am sensible in doing so, God gives me more of his gracious presence, and that alone can make our paradise, 'and where he is, there is Heaven.' That it should affect your friend so, is a deep affliction to me, and but for the presence of the Lord, I believe I should sink under it ... But consider our Saviour, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the majesty on high. The prophet informs us that this is not our rest -- it is polluted, and that it will destroy us with a sore destruction. That I still love my family, and am willing to do any thing in my power to benefit them, he who searches my heart, is witness. But the present opposition to my course is an affliction, and I must bear it. The painful strife will soon be over, and in eternity it will not add anything to our consequence whether we walked or rode in this world. All will then, no doubt, regard whatever ministered to pride in this life as vanity, and whatever served to lead them to humility, as the greatest blessings.

I do not believe that I have enjoyed the true sanctification of my spirit since I was on the Buckingham circuit. Many visits of the good Spirit I have enjoyed, but not the true, settled presence of God. And I can assure you that I have had many struggles in my mind since that period. After getting my shoulder broken, it clearly appeared to me as the better way, to walk; and the last year the same impressions were made upon my mind; but worldly prudence, the contempt of families, &c., prevented me from adopting it. But what is all this world without the clear sense of God's approbation? -- this, and this alone, is the pearl of great price ... Let me hear from you early; and be just as plain as the good Lord may put it in your heart to be. I think the language of my heart is, "search me and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." My health is tolerably good; though I am a worm, and no man -- a reproach, and despised of the people; but if the Lord will only say, "well done good and faithful servant," it will be enough.

Yours truly,  
John W. Childs

We have no comment to make on this letter. Mr. Childs believed he was doing right, and it was not an easy matter to turn him aside from the path that he believed to be the path of duty. He continued on foot for some time, until it became necessary, on account of bodily afflictions, to return to the saddle again.



June 18th, he writes -- "We have as yet no great signs of extensive revival. The Lord has mercifully converted a few souls, and others are mourning. We pray that a mighty harvest may be gathered into the garner. My soul, I think, prospers in the divine life. I feel that God is love; and I want more of this heaven-born principle. My body has been somewhat afflicted, but the will of the Lord he done."

About the same time he wrote to Mrs. Childs' mother, then in Mississippi, from which we make the following quotations. "We are keeping house in this place, (Liberty,) and so far we have met with a very kind people, and all our wants have been supplied. Our aim is to cut off all unnecessary wants. And what wisdom from above does this require? 'Do I know how to abound, and yet not gratify unnecessary wants?' inquires Mr. Fletcher. I fear but few Christians attain to this state in the present world; and yet it seems plain that St. Paul had attained unto it.

"We have not been favored with a great revival this year; some, however, have been converted, for which we desire to be truly thankful.

"It is now nearly four o'clock in the morning. All are hushed in sleep. How solemn to meditate on that slumber that awaits us all! Faith in our blessed Saviour alone can give us solace in view of that last sleep. He died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."

June 24th, in a letter to his Lynchburg correspondent, he says -- "Since writing you, my body has been twice or thrice afflicted, and the frail tenement seemed to shake; but the good Lord has mercifully turned aside his wrath. In consequence of my last affliction I have found it necessary to ride, and I assure you that I try to lay no stress upon either. It is the favor and image of God that I seek; and if he deign to smile, whether riding or walking, all is well."

Mr. Childs prosecuted his work with his usual zeal and energy through the whole year, but not with the same results, so far as the conversion of sinners was concerned, that had crowned his labors the two previous years. The autumn passed away with its mellow sunsets and gold-tinted clouds; the farmers gathered in their crops; and stern winter was seen on tiptoe upon the mountains drawing his snowy mantle around him. The year was rapidly drawing to a close, and Mr. Childs began to review his labors. He saw much that was a source of disquiet to his mind; and as usual he wrote severe things of himself. But he continued to preach and pray, and visit from house to house, until the eve of Conference.

Jan. 29th, 1840, he writes thus to a friend -- "Oh! what is this world without an indwelling Christ. It is but a vast wilderness -- but a scene of confusion. How much is implied in being 'born again,' and growing up in him in all things. I feel that I have greatly come short, and I tremble for myself. What a solemn responsibility rests upon our shoulders. Oh! to be clear of the blood of all men! Not to shun to declare the whole counsel of God! How tremendous a work!

"We are closing the affairs of the circuit, and perhaps may leave here on the 12th or 13th February."

Mr. Childs passed through Lynchburg on his way to Conference, which met that year in Farmville, and left his family at Mr. Early's. He was present at the opening of the session, and seems still to have had it in contemplation to get a transfer to another Conference, should a providential opening for such a step present itself.

From the seat of the Conference he wrote, on the 21st Feb. to his wife -- "Our Conference progresses tolerably in business. Bishop Waugh is here, in usual health. As yet I see no opening of Providence to another Conference. Oh! that the Lord would teach me how to be reconciled. Our old difficulties have not agitated us -- may they be thoroughly healed. I see much to praise the Lord for, and much to deplore. I feel that my own heart is not fully renewed. Oh! help me to pray for that entire sanctification of spirit that is so necessary to my present peace and future happiness.

"As to where we shall go the ensuing year I can say nothing. I dare not choose for myself; though at times I feel awfully pressed. I know if I were more faithful, I should not be left to such a state of doubt and uncertainty. May the Lord deliver me wholly from this state of mind."

Mr. Childs was appointed from this Conference to the Chesterfield circuit, lying between the James and Appomattox rivers, and immediately adjacent to the city of Richmond.

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#### Chapter 14 CHESTERFIELD CIRCUIT -- 1840-41

Reception -- The circuit -- State of his mind -- Work of revival commences -- Death of his brother -- 300 Souls converted -- Attends Conference -- Returned -- Letter to Mrs. E. -- Labors through the year -- Staunton Fields' recollections of Mr. Childs -- Attends Conference -- Sent to Cumberland circuit

With his usual promptitude Mr. Childs repaired to his appointment, and commenced his labors for the year. He took his family with him to the circuit, and left them with a friend in the town of Manchester, just across the river from Richmond, and set out immediately to meet his first round of appointments, and to make a survey of his new field of labor. He was received with great cordiality; says he found the people exceedingly kind; and was encouraged by the success which attended the word of life dispensed by him.

He says -- "I find the circuit less compact, and more inconvenient than any I have traveled lately; but if the Lord will be with us, and give us souls for our hire, these matters we must gladly forego." In the same letter from which we have made this extract, he adds -- "I think I can say that the bent of my mind, and the settled purpose of my soul is to seek after holiness. God has visited me again and again since we parted. My body has been somewhat afflicted, but still I think my soul follows hard after holiness; and though my progress is small, yet I am not without hope that 'I shall his witness live, when sin is all destroyed;' when every word, and thought, and temper, and action shall be governed by love."

May 18th, writing to the same person to whom the above was addressed, he says -- "We have met with many kind friends on this circuit; but have not as yet fixed on any place to board. Manchester is desirable, but it is in a corner of the circuit. I know not that we shall meet with a suitable place. In this, as in all other matters, I desire to say, 'The will of the Lord be done.' These things seem to keep us in remembrance that we are strangers and pilgrims here below. Oh, that we may truly seek after a heavenly country!

"We have had some few souls converted on the circuit, and I think there is a general expectation among the members that God will revive his work. My health has been unusually feeble this spring -- several times almost overpowered with weakness -- but, blessed be the Lord, I think he strengthens me; and I feel better in soul and body. My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in the God of my salvation.

"I have lately heard of the death of my dearest and youngest brother, and that, too, by an accident -- the running away of the horses with an omnibus, in which he was seated; but, thank God, this does not discourage me. My soul within me says, 'Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee.'"

As the summer advanced, the work of revival commenced and extended in great power round the circuit, and many were the subjects of God's converting grace. The work continued till late in autumn. October 26th he says, in one of his letters -- "We have had a good work on the circuit the present year. I think more than three hundred have professed, and still a good prospect.

"We are about establishing a parsonage for this circuit in Manchester. The house is already bought and money enough subscribed to pay for it, if we can collect it, which we hope to do, by the end or before the end of the year ... But, amid all, alas! I have to complain of my leanness and unprofitableness. My progress towards heaven is slow. Oh! I see that I have much to do, and but little time to do it in. Oh! for grace to buy up every moment of time, and occupy all to the glory of God."

November 24th, he writes -- "We are not doing much now on the circuit, though some professed conversion during my last round. May they be faithful; and may the good Lord revive us yet more and more. I think my heart still desires God; and nothing but the living God can satisfy me. Oh! that I may be able to cast this weary world behind my back. We have many kind friends on this circuit; while they minister to our temporal wants, the Lord make us instrumental of great spiritual good to them."

The Conference for this year held its session in the town of Lynchburg, in the month of January, 1841. Mr. Childs left his family -- now consisting of a wife and three children, all daughters -- with his friend and Christian brother, Charles W. Friend of Chesterfield, and went up to the Conference. Nothing of special interest connected with himself transpired during his absence. He was returned to the Chesterfield circuit; and, immediately on his arrival at Mr. Friend's, within the bounds of his charge, he wrote the following letter to Mrs. E. of Lynchburg:--

Chesterfield Circuit, January 27th, 1841

My Dear Sister E. -- I hasten to comply with my promise to write to you, on my arrival here, which was not until a few hours ago. Through the Divine mercy, I found all tolerably well.

After leaving you, I fell in with Brother D., and before night we joined Brother W. We found some difficulty in procuring a lodging place for the night; but were at length kindly entertained by a Baptist family at a low price. The next day we traveled on to Brother Redd's, in Prince Edward county, where we spent the Sabbath, and held meeting at Mount Pleasant church.

I feel that I am unworthy of a name and place among the Lord's people. Oh! how far short of my duty and the glory of the Lord do I come. "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good" I do not at all times find. I know there is a perfect salvation offered us through Jesus Christ; but I know it requires fidelity on our part to enjoy it. But, alas! I am not worthy to 'gather up the crumbs from his table. Oh! help me to pray more earnestly that my soul, at all times, may enjoy the full image of the Saviour. Shall anything short of this great salvation satisfy us? Oh! pray, Sister E., that I may press onward to the mark of the prize. I am sensible that this salvation is received and enjoyed by a naked faith in a naked promise, as says Mr. Fletcher; and this faith is surely to work by love. But what confused notions have we of this loving our neighbor as ourselves! How prone are we to be inordinate lovers of ourselves! Doubtless, to love ourselves properly is right; for, says the Apostle, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church;" but we are prone to go beyond the bounds of reason, Scripture, and moderation. Oh! may the Lord open the eyes of our understanding, that we may see clearly "what is the hope of our calling." For my part, I see no other way than daily to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. And nothing but the daily and hourly influences of the Divine Spirit can teach us what is implied in this ... Oh! how important that all our afflictions be sanctified to us; for, when this is not the case, we only give heaven leave to make us still more wretched -- not more wise.

We expect to commence housekeeping as early as possible. I remain your unworthy but affectionate brother,

John W. Childs

In April he writes: "Of late the Lord has been visiting and refreshing my spirit, and in some measure strengthening my hands to the war. Yet I find myself in great want of power, and moral energy. The world I find to be infectious -- a school of wrong, and I fear that the majority of us, at best, 'see men as trees walking.' We need more of the 'eye-salve' spoken of by St. John, 'that we may see.' I fear we are far, very far, from being what we ought to be, and what we must be 'to enter through the gates into the city.' And why are we not wholly the Lord's? 'Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?' It is a melancholy reflection! None of us will lament being 'crucified to the world' when we come to die. May Satan not beguile us as an angel of light. May our God give us understanding that we may know his devices."

The year glided away without anything of particular note in the life of Mr. Childs. He labored with his usual fidelity; kept up all his habits of devotion; did not slacken in his course, but his ministry was not crowned with the conversion of as many souls as it had been the previous

year. But he rendered the circuit a valuable service in training up the recent additions to the membership, for usefulness in the church. He saw the parsonage furnished, and occupied it one year himself.

The time of holding the Conference was changed to November 1841, so that the Conference year was shortened, and two sessions were held in the same current year.

Oct. 23d, we find him closing up the affairs of the circuit. Writing to a friend he says:-- "We are not doing much in a religious way in our circuit. Some revival in the upper part. Dr. W\_\_\_\_ lately was powerfully converted on the road home, after visiting a patient, who died the same evening."

Staunton Field was Mr. Childs' colleague on the Chesterfield circuit in 1841; and he has kindly furnished us with some recollections and impressions of the holy man with whom he had "the good fortune" to be associated, which we take pleasure in laying before the reader in this connection. He writes as follows:--

"It was my good fortune to have been placed, the first year of my ministry, as junior preacher, with Rev. John W. Childs, on the Chesterfield circuit. This was in 1841. He took me at once into the closest and most affectionate intimacy; and during the whole year, always evinced the most unremitting and unaffected solicitude for my spiritual welfare, and ministerial usefulness. When we met, which we did once in every two weeks, at some particular point on the circuit, he would uniformly embrace me, and pressing me to his bosom, breathe a heartfelt expression of gratitude to God for having spared us to meet again.

"He did not hesitate to tell me, in the most tender and affectionate manner, however -- whatever he conceived to be wrong or improper, either in my manners, or ministerial conduct. And though it was difficult to differ in opinion upon matters of taste or propriety with so good a man, yet there was one trait in his character very unusual, if not unique, in all others of his cast, which I much admired -- that was, never to proscribe his brethren for mere opinion's sake. He expressed his own views freely -- that done, others were at liberty to exercise their own judgments without the hazard of giving him offense, or provoking his censure. He had his own standard of piety; and while it was far above that of ordinary Christians, he did not disenfranchise any from the claims and privileges of Christianity because they did not measure up to it. He earnestly enforced upon all the duty of seeking for, and attaining unto that 'fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ,' which he enjoyed; but seemed to embrace and love them none the less for not doing, in every respect, as he felt it his duty to do. This trait in the character and spirit of our lamented brother, redeems him entirely from that imputation of stoical exclusivism which some have most unjustly cast upon him. He was no cynic -- no exclusionist, but a noble, liberal man, with as warm and generous a heart as ever beat in mortal breast. Nay, he was highly social in his disposition, if not a good companion.

"I will state here one circumstance, others might be mentioned, in proof of what I have asserted. During our labors on the circuit, a very distinguished physician, eminent not only for his professional skill, but also for his wickedness, was converted. Before his conversion, his wife being a Methodist, his house was the preacher's home in that part of the circuit. But the Dr. always

shunned as far as possible, Brother Childs' company; and while he treated him with courtesy, he was heard to say -- so disagreeable was Mr. Childs' company to him -- that he would sooner be with a corpse than with such a man. But, to show the ground of this antipathy to the presence of this holy man, on the part of this irreligious gentleman, after he was converted he declared that he loved Mr. Childs better than any man he ever knew, as a Christian; and found him to be so different from what he had supposed, and so agreeable as a social companion, that he could sit up all night in his society; and that his conversation and company afforded him a pleasure that knew no satiety.

"When the real character of this eminent servant of God was properly understood, it was divested of that gloom and repulsiveness with which it seemed enshrouded to the eye of the casual acquaintance.

"He was the politest man I ever knew. It was seen in his very walk, it glowed in his countenance, it spoke in the tones of his voice, and was read in every movement and act of his life. If ever man conversed with God on earth, if ever human spirit lived in communion with heaven while in the body, John Wesley Childs was that man. Prayer was the atmosphere in which he lived, moved, and had his continual being."

Mr. Childs attended the Conference which was held in Portsmouth, and was appointed, for the year 1842, to the Cumberland circuit.

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## Chapter 15

### CUMBERLAND CIRCUIT -- 1842 AND 1843

Goes to his Circuit -- Parsonage -- Letter -- State of the Work -- His own Soul -- Another Letter -- Year expires -- Conference -- Return -- Letter -- His Labors -- Recollections of Mr. Childs by John M. Saunders -- Conference -- Appointed to Nottoway Circuit

The Cumberland circuit embraces a pleasant section of country, lying between the James and Appomattox rivers, and about midway between the towns of Petersburg and Lynchburg. It includes within its limits a considerable portion of Buckingham county; and the parsonage for the circuit is located near the Buckingham Female College, and has recently been immortalized in the beautiful verse of "Matilda."

On his return from Conference to the Chesterfield circuit, and before his departure for his new appointment, he wrote a letter to his wife's parents in Mississippi, in which he says:-- "We had hoped to have reached our circuit before the commencement of winter weather, but were yesterday forestalled by a snowstorm, six or eight inches deep, which is rather unusual for this climate, at so early a period. We have not however, more than sixty or seventy miles to travel, and no regular appointment for preaching before the 5th of December. We pray that the Lord may prosper us on our journey, and cause all things to work together for our good. Oh! may 'the blood of the everlasting covenant make perfect us in every good work to do his will; working in us that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' May we be freed from all anger,

all pride, all discontent, all fretfulness, &c. It certainly is the will of the Lord, even our sanctification. May we contend earnestly for it in the name of our great Mediator."

In due time Mr. Childs reached his circuit, saw his family comfortably situated in the parsonage, and entered at once upon his regular work. Nothing occurred during the winter, worthy of note. He was steadily engaged in trying to lead sinners to Christ, and laboring to build up the membership in the faith of the gospel; but was greatly hindered in his work by the inclemency of the weather, and the usual untoward circumstances which operated against the successful prosecution of circuit labor, during the winter months, in our climate.

April 13th, 1842, he writes thus to Mrs. E.:-- "Through mercy we are all tolerably well, and I hope still striving to enter in at the strait gate; but I fear not making those vigorous efforts which the necessity of the case requires. I hope, however, the good Lord is still with us, in a measure, and is still our 'sun and shield.' I hope that he is still your light and salvation, and I hope also that the children are standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free; and also that the servants are sharing in the mercy of our Lord.

"We are not doing much on the circuit; or, at least, we do not yet see much fruit, though some few appear to be serious, and some have professed religion at their homes, which I think is a good sign. It seems to indicate that they are engaged there. Oh! may the Lord pour upon his people the spirit of supplication, that their prayers may be answered. I fear that Zion, comparatively, sits solitary; and in some places there seems to be great apathy on the subject of religion; though I know the Lord can do all things; and were it not for this view of the matter, I should be perfectly discouraged. Oh! that God would arise and maintain his own cause, and let his enemies be scattered before him -- or rather subdued by the power of his grace.

"I see a great need for a closer walk with God -- for more firmness, meekness, and all other Christian graces in their fullness. I do fear that we are far, very far behind, on the great subject of sanctification. It surely must be our privilege, as well as bounden duty, to have all our affections, appetites, and passions purified; our judgments corrected; our wills refined, by divine grace, so that they may readily choose what is good and acceptable to our heavenly Father. Jesus died for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity. I know it requires a sacrifice to attain to this state. Flesh and sense must be denied. Indeed, I think with the poet, that we must

'kneel and pray this prayer:--  
Lord God, thy will be done -- thy holy will,  
Howe'er it cross my own; hard labor this,  
For flesh and blood.'

"But still the things that are impossible with man are possible with God. But surely every moment we need the merit of the Saviour's death, to enable us to do this. Oh, that he may make us perfect!"

There does not appear to have been any very extensive revival on the circuit during the summer. But Mr. Childs did not abate in his labors. He continued the same through summer's heat, and winter's cold. He was always at work, whether successful or otherwise. He acted on the

recommendation of Solomon:-- "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both alike shall be good." He always tried faithfully to do his duty, and then left consequences to God; and yet he seemed to be greatly pained when his preaching was not followed by the conversion of souls. He was always too ready to accuse and condemn himself when he had dispensed the word of life without success.

June 25th, he writes to Mrs. Early, in which, after mentioning the afflictions of a member of the family, he says:-- "No doubt, as a general rule, it is the will of our heavenly Father, that our bodies should prosper, and be in health even as our souls prosper; but, perhaps, many of us have to say, health is a talent that our Lord may see that it is not best for us to be entrusted with; and, therefore, for wise purposes, withholds this boon. Our language should be, 'most gladly, therefore, will I suffer, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' But I seriously fear, in my own case, this desirable end is not accomplished -- that I do not at all times suffer according to the will of our Heavenly Father. Perhaps it is the consequence of my own imprudence. I need more grace, that I may guard this point, and, as the poet says,

"Leave no unguarded place,  
No weakness of the soul."

"Oh! I feel, sister E\_\_\_\_, that to this hour I am too worldly -- too much conformed to this world -- to its maxims, its customs, its spirit, its fashions. 'Know ye not,' says the apostle, 'that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? if any man will be the friend of the world, he is the enemy of God.' We all read these things; but does the truth have a practical and experimental operation upon our hearts and lives? Alas! alas! I fear with too many of us, we say, Lord, Lord, and do not the things he has commanded. Pray for me, that from this very hour I may awake and keep awake, and never again sleep in any carnal security. Nothing short of the direct witness of the Spirit should satisfy us. Oh! that we may ever enjoy this heavenly pledge in our bosoms. Without [unless] we have it, or are earnestly seeking after it, we are surely building on the sand. Oh! may we dig deep, and lay our foundation upon the rock of eternity -- even the Lord Jesus Christ, his doctrine, his example, his atoning blood, his Holy Spirit.

"We have not much interest on the circuit, though two souls, in the neighborhood, professed religion during the present week."

September 27th he writes again to the same:-- "How many are our blessings compared with our afflictions -- perhaps as ten thousand to one; and yet how the mercies are forgotten, and the afflictions numbered and remembered! How clearly this shows the deep, the inveterate corruption of our nature! O God, for Jesus' sake, take it all away, and write indelible lines of gratitude upon our hearts. The heathen used to say, to call a man ungrateful, was to say every thing bad of him in one word. I fear, upon a retrospect of my past life, that this dark blot has marked almost every step of my journey. Pray for me, that it may be removed, and that gratitude and praise, cordial and constant, may evermore flame to heaven from my poor heart. It is what our God expects. 'Angels look down for heaven's superior praise -- they sing creation; but we should sing redemption, too!' I see and feel, I had almost said, a thousand infirmities -- perhaps more; but is



there not a remedy for all in Jesus? Oh! that I could hide myself in the cleft of his side, until the calamities of life be overpast! God grant that we may find an asylum there from every storm!

"I fear we are doing but little on our circuit; a few have professed religion in different parts. But alas! alas! I fear there is lukewarmness prevailing to a great extent, and the love of many, it is to be apprehended, waxes cold. If the fault be in me, pray that it may be taken away, and that the fire of love may burn fervently within. I do feel thankful that I am out of perdition, and am permitted to live where I may recover strength before I go hence, and shall be seen no more among men. I want a faith

'That pain and death defies,  
Most vigorous when the body dies.'

Let us strive to live with Jesus in the vessel, and then the billows rise in vain. Glory be to God, he commands the winds, and the waves obey him. May we ever feel that we are under the care of the master of the storm."

The foregoing extracts from Mr. Childs' correspondence will supply the reader with a tolerably well connected history of his religious state, and of the success which attended his ministry. There seems to have been nothing of special interest on the circuit during the year.

The Conference was held in the month of November, in the town of Petersburg, which Mr. Childs attended, and from which he was re-appointed to the Cumberland circuit. At this session of the Conference there was, by mutual concession of the parties concerned, a friendly adjustment of some old difficulties, which for several years had interrupted the peace and harmony of the brethren. This was a source of the highest gratification to Mr. Childs. He rejoiced over it, as over great spoils. He always prayed for the peace of Jerusalem; and nothing wounded him more than unfriendly and acrimonious controversies among his brethren. In this case, it had well-nigh driven him from the Conference; but the return of peace gladdened his heart, and was to him a source of the most unfeigned delight. He alludes to the matter in the following letter:--

Cumberland Circuit, December 10th, 1842

Dear Sister:-- We have returned to the parsonage, where it is likely we shall remain during the winter, if our lives are spared. Our return to the circuit was quite unexpected, though we hope it will be for the best. How much we need your prayers, that the Lord would overrule all things for his glory and our good. My principal objection to returning was, a fear that the spiritual good of the people would not be promoted thereby. I know, however, that the Lord can be better to us than all our fears. May it be so in this case.

You no doubt have greatly rejoiced in the amicable adjustment of the difficulties that pressed many of the brethren of the Conference. The Lord grant that similar difficulties may never arise. Oh, for more of the spirit of forbearance and forgiveness! Without this it is impossible to get along either temporally or spiritually.

The winter seems to set in rather gloomily, especially for the accomplishment of much good in religious matters. We have done very little since Conference, in deed, we may say, nothing at all...

Oh! that I could glorify God in my body and in my spirit, which are his.

Affectionately, your brother in Christ,  
John W. Childs

The year 1843 was distinguished by nothing remarkable in the life of Mr. Childs. His ministry was crowned with a measure of success, but not with any very extensive revival. From all that can be gathered of this year's labors, the results appear very similar to those of the preceding year. The same fidelity, devotion, and zeal, marked his course, that we have seen displayed in the previous portions of his life.

John M. Saunders was his colleague on the Cumberland circuit in 1843; and in reply to a letter of inquiry, in relation to his impressions of Mr. Childs as a Christian, a minister of Jesus Christ, and a man, he has furnished the following, which we take pleasure in laying before the reader.

"It certainly affords me a high degree of pleasure to be of the least service to you, in your laudable undertaking of writing the life of my dear, departed friend and brother, Rev. Childs.

"As to my 'impressions of the man.' I have read a little upon the necessity of thorough consecration to Almighty God; but never, in the course of that reading, was I so fully convinced of the essentiality of that state of piety, until it was my happiness to be associated with Mr. Childs on the Cumberland circuit in 1843. In him I found a living representative, as I believe, of this blessed state. I say nothing of philosophic cause, nothing of my being a creature of sense, and therefore, like Thomas, determined not to believe, until the evidence of sense should make its impression; this, however, I do say, in all sincerity, that the ocular [visible] demonstrations of entire sanctity given me, in the life of this holy man, fully convinced me of its absolute necessity and attainableness in this life. That conviction is fresh in my mind to this hour.

"If, therefore, I have ever made one personal, moral effort to attain to this happy state in religion, or insisted on its importance in the life of my fellow men, it is directly, or indirectly traceable to the influence of this man of God upon my heart and mind.

"It strikes me there was a great similarity between the holy and beloved disciple, John, and the godly man of whom I write. In proof of this, I recollect that, on a certain occasion, he advised me, with considerable force, to keep before me St. John, as my model in preaching. He was a great admirer of Mr. Wesley, but St. John was his model; and I really think there were strikingly similar elements in the two men.

"I watched Mr. Childs, whenever I was with him, very closely: not with an evil eye, but to satisfy my own mind of the extent of his piety; and I assure you he seemed always in the presence of his Divine Master.

"In the past history of the Virginia Conference, it will be remembered there was, for a time, some unfortunate sparring between some of its members. On one occasion there was something said that seemed to excite a holy indignation in his righteous soul. I do not now remember the cause of this indignation, nor do I think he was personally involved. He, however, was forced to take the floor in vindication of the honor of the church. As he arose, I cast a searching look upon him, to see if he maintained his usual complacency amid the storm that was prevailing around him. My eyes fell immediately upon that calm and heavenly face, and it was slightly tinged with crimson. Never shall I forget the sublime moral effort he made to conquer self. And conquer he did. After giving utterance to a few sentences he took his seat, and that face again wore its usual, almost transparent pallor.

"I have never formed the acquaintance of so prayerful a man. I relate an incident illustrative of this statement. While associated with him in 1843, I was spending a few days at the parsonage which he occupied, situated in the immediate vicinity of the Buckingham Female College. I was seated in his quiet parlor, either reading or writing, when my attention was suddenly arrested by the hurried and rapid ringing of the chapel bell of the college, at an unusual hour. I left the room in great haste to ascertain the cause. On my reaching the front door of the parsonage, to my surprise, I found Mr. Childs standing there, earnestly engaged in prayer. I inquired quickly why the bell was ringing, looking at the same moment in the direction of the college, and to my dismay, saw smoke and flames bursting from the chimney, and a part of the roof of the building. Before I could advance another step, he answered very calmly, 'The college is on fire, and I do not know whether it would be more beneficial to proceed forthwith and lend them physical aid, or send them help by way of prayer.' I looked again -- the flames were extinguished. This incident gave rise to conflicting opinions in my mind. The first thought was that my good friend was an enthusiast, expecting the accomplishment of certain ends without the use of appropriate means. The second, that he was truly a Christian philosopher, and consequently felt assured that the great God to whom he prayed had all the elements of nature under his control; and that in answer to the prayer of faith he would suppress the fury of that flame. I positively declare it as the settled conviction of my own mind, that eternity alone can develop the benefits granted to individuals, to communities, and to the church of Jesus Christ, through the prayers of John Wesley Childs.

"In my association with him I have frequently blushed for very shame, at the contrast between his industrious habits of study and devotion and my own slothfulness. He was truly Wesleyan in his habits. His hour for rising was four o'clock. After prayer, he would open his Bible, and study it upon his knees for hours together. I think I may say with emphasis he was homo unius libri. [a man of one book] He certainly was a patient, prayerful, and laborious student of the Holy Scriptures, and of the standard works of the church. Hence he was an approved minister of Christ. And though by nature and grace a son of consolation, if necessary, he was severely faithful. He never honeyed his tongue 'to gain earth's gilded toys,' nor avoided the cross endured by his Lord. On a certain occasion he ascended the pulpit as if determined to discharge the musketry of heaven against the sins of his congregation, and many that day received dead shots. He waxed warm as he progressed with his discourse, and at last, gathering himself up in the strength of his master, he shouted with terrific and startling accents, 'Death to the abominable sin I combat! Death

to adultery in all its degrees!" There was something in his manner, and in the intonations of his voice, that really made the wicked tremble.

"Mr. Childs was very abstemious. He understood the necessity of keeping the flesh in subjection -- he knew its powerful tendency to tyrannize over the intellectual and moral man; hence he strove with the apostle to keep his body under. I have no knowledge of the rules by which he was governed in fasting. I have often been struck with his extreme temperance in eating while seated with him at the table. It was a matter of marvel with me how the small quantity of food which he received sustained him.

"In his social contacts he was distinguished for his meek gentility. He was no sickly sentimentalist. He felt that the present life is a solemn reality, running parallel in its results with the lines of eternity, and that he had neither time nor license to trifle with his fellow men. He seemed to say in every thing he did --

'Life is real! life is earnest;  
And the grave is not its goal!'

Still I never knew him violate a single law governing well-bred Christian gentlemen. In discharging what he believed his pious duty in the private circles of life, -- such as reproving ladies for wearing jewelry, and gay and costly apparel, there was always a suavity about his manner that won the affection of the subjects of his reproof. I never knew him to give offense. Once, together with Professor L. and Brother E. we were enjoying the hospitalities of a Presbyterian gentleman and lady. The lady wore several finger rings, and a large and costly breast pin. We were surprised that Brother Childs had not noticed her. In that we were mistaken; he had noticed her and had made his arrangements to do his duty. Accordingly, when we were taking our leave of this kind family, Mr. Childs took her by the hand, and asked her, as a brother in Jesus, 'My sister, does it do you any good to wear that jewelry?' She smilingly replied, 'No, sir.' 'Then why do you wear it, my sister?' I am sure he impressed that family with his courtesy as a gentleman, and his faithfulness as a Christian minister. Peace to his ashes -- eternal life to his soul. Oh! that the mantle of his piety might fall on some member of the Virginia Conference."

Mr. Childs had many warm and devoted friends on the Cumberland circuit, who parted with him at the end of his term of service, with unfeigned regret. He had endeared himself to them by his faithfulness as a pastor, and by his honesty as a preacher of the everlasting Gospel. The church had been profited by his ministry, and he had not labored without souls for his hire.

He attended the session of the Conference held for that year in the city of Richmond, in the month of November, and was assigned, for the year 1844 to the Nottoway circuit.

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Chapter 16

NOTTOWAY AND CAMPBELL CIRCUITS -- 1844 AND 1845

Rather dissatisfied -- Old difficulties -- Determines to go to another Conference -- Letter -- Division of the Methodist Episcopal Church -- Leaves the circuit -- Singular providences -- Detained in Lynchburg -- Sickness of his family -- Letter -- Abandons the idea of removal -- Conference -- Appointed to the Campbell circuit -- Year's labors -- Conference -- Sent to the Bedford circuit

The Nottoway circuit lies west of Petersburg, and between the Nottoway and Appomattox rivers, and embraces one of the most interesting sections of Virginia. The society is polished and wealthy, and Methodism occupies a high and influential position in the county. The circuit parsonage is located on the outskirts of the courthouse village, and is surrounded by a most pleasant and delightful community. There is scarcely an appointment in the Virginia Conference that presents more points of attraction than the Nottoway circuit. A part of this circuit was included in the Brunswick circuit, at the time Mr. Childs traveled it in 1831, so that he was not altogether unacquainted with his new charge.

It appears that something of rather an unpleasant and disagreeable character had occurred, connected with his administration of discipline, when he was formerly pastor of the Brunswick circuit; and the portion of the circuit in which these difficulties had transpired was now embraced in the Nottoway charge. This, it seems, rendered the appointment a cross to Mr. Childs, as will be seen from the following extract of a letter, written to a friend a short time after his arrival on the circuit:--

"December 27, 1843 -- We, through mercy, are tolerably well, and have gotten to the parsonage, but find things out of order; however, we are here, and hope we shall be provided for, both in reference to our souls and bodies. The friends have been tolerably kind -- some of them very kind. I pray that the Lord may reward them.

"It was a great cross for me to come to this circuit, owing to some circumstances which transpired when I traveled here before; and had I consulted my own will I should have labored to have had it otherwise; but this I dared not do. Not that there was anything in my mind against any human being here, or elsewhere, but a fear that I should be unacceptable to some of the people. Pray that our way may be opened, and that we may have a year of prosperity, and many souls for our hire.

"As yet we have done but little, owing to the inclemency of the weather. May the Lord overrule all to his glory, and the people's good; and if we cannot be fishing, we should be surely striving to mend our nets."

Mr. Childs seems again to have determined, should a kind Providence open his way, to remove to another Conference. This was a subject that occupied much of his thoughts. His mind does not appear to have been settled in relation to this matter, and yet it gave him a great deal of anxious thought and trouble. What his reasons were for desiring this change we are not fully advised; for he scarcely ever says more in his correspondence on the subject, than that he thought he might be more useful in another part of his Master's vineyard; and yet he was not fully satisfied that it would be so in the event of a removal.

The following letter, addressed to his wife's parents in Mississippi, will more fully explain his state of mind in reference to this whole matter:

Nottoway Court-house, Va., Jan. 1st, 1844.

Dear Parents:-- Through the mercy of the good Lord we are tolerably well, and have arrived in safety on the circuit, and are living in the parsonage located at this place. Oh! that our God would give us success in our labors, and make us wise to win souls to Christ.

We sincerely hope that this may find you in good health; but above all, "may the peace of God, that passeth understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

We have been contemplating a removal from this Conference to one more westerly, but have been rather providentially hindered. We would ask an interest in your prayers that the good Lord may guide us aright. If I thought the spirit that prompted such a measure was a restless, dissatisfied spirit, I would endeavor at once promptly to check it. My prayer is that the Lord would search me, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in a plain path. I think I can say all my desire is a larger measure of grace on earth, and a brighter crown of glory in heaven. May I not be disappointed in my expectations. "We must suffer with him if we would reign with him."

May the God of Abraham be your God, and your guide a all your days on earth, and finally take you to heaven.

Yours, sincerely and affectionately,  
John W. Childs

It does not appear that anything of interest occurred on the circuit during the winter and spring. Indeed, we are strongly inclined to think that the state of Mr. Childs' mind in relation to his contemplated removal to another Conference, operated very considerably against his ordinary success in dispensing the word of God. In the meantime, the General Conference of 1844 came on, and the disastrous results of that memorable session swept over the whole sunny south like a wintry gale from Norway. The minds of the people were everywhere turned to the unfortunate controversy that sundered the great Methodist family into two separate divisions; and the precious time of our ministers and membership was spent in holding meetings, adopting resolutions, and making speeches, instead of the vigorous prosecution of the great objects of the ministry. The consequence was, a sort of spiritual dearth spread over the land for a while, and only here and there did a refreshing shower fall upon the barren and thirsty fields.

During the session of the Conference, Mr. Childs wrote again to his friends in Mississippi, from which we quote as follows:

"May 24th, 1844 -- We have great cause to be thankful to a kind Providence that he has opened the hearts of his people, and so far our wants have been supplied. Oh! may he anoint our heads with oil, and may our cup run over, that goodness and mercy may follow us all the days of our life, and that we may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

"We hope ere this you are fixed somewhat at your new home: but beware of building 'tabernacles' here. There can be no doubt that all our afflictions, losses, disappointments, or whatever we meet with, are intended to put us in mind that this is not our rest -- that it is polluted, and will destroy us with a sore destruction if we lean upon it. Mr. Wesley somewhere makes this remark, 'that we should embrace every event, good and bad, as the declared will of God; and that crosses are so frequent that if we make improvement of them, we shall make swift progress in the Divine life.' May he overrule all your troubles for your good.

"We are still meditating a removal to Kentucky, or farther west, and pray that Providence may direct us.

"You will see by the accompanying paper that Bro. E. is in New York, attending the General Conference; and you will also see by the same, that we are likely to have stormy times. May a good Providence guide the ship."

Mr. Childs' family was now rapidly growing up around him. He had, at this time, four daughters, the oldest of whom was at an age requiring a regular course of instruction. There was no school in the immediate neighborhood of the parsonage suited to her age and advancement, and he therefore employed a teacher to give her private instructions. Speaking of his children, in a letter to a friend, he says -- "I feel that it is a solemn and responsible charge to bring them up for God and eternity'. Lord, help us." Mr. Childs loved his children, and always manifested the deepest interest in their welfare, spiritual and temporal. Yet he never spoiled them. He did his utmost, from their childhood, to "train them up in the way they should go." He restrained them from everything that, to him, had the appearance of evil; and tried, most diligently, to make them totally disregard the fashions and worldly amusements of the day. He was strict, yet mild and affectionate in his family government.

As the summer advanced, he finally determined at once to carry into practical effect his long-cherished purpose of removing to a western Conference; and, in the month of August, rather unexpectedly to his charge, he adjusted the affairs of the circuit as best he could, and started with his family for Kentucky. He proceeded as far as Lynchburg on his journey, where his progress was arrested by the sudden illness of three of his children. They were all attacked, without any previous exposure, with scarlet fever. What was a little remarkable was, that at the time of their attack there was no case of scarlet fever in the town, nor had he or his family been in any family or neighborhood in which it was prevailing.

The circumstances under which his children were prostrated by sickness, made a powerful impression upon his mind, and yet he did not, during the early stages of the disease, abandon his purpose of pursuing his journey on their recovery. But one of the children continued to grow worse, and it was evident that a protracted illness must follow, if indeed she stood any chance, in human probability, of recovery. Days of intense anxiety glided away, as she continued to decline under the increasingly aggravated symptoms of her fearful malady -- weeks passed on, and yet there was no change for the better. Mr. Childs then began to look upon this affliction as a providential interposition to prevent his removal from the Conference of which he was a member. He prayed for Divine direction. He was walking in darkness, and had no light. He was anxious to

know what was the will of God concerning him. At last his mind settled down in the conviction that he was traveling out of the order of Providence; and he deliberately, and with perfect acquiescence in what he believed to be the will of God, resolved to abandon all idea of his long contemplated transfer to another Conference, until led forth by a Providence that he could not misapprehend.

During the continuance of the sickness of his children, he wrote the following letter to his wife's mother, now a widow, from which the reader will learn something of the state of his mind under his sore and distressing trials:--

Lynchburg, Virginia, September 10th, 1844

Dear Mother:-- We have received several letters informing us of the death of your husband, our dear father. While we feel afflicted at our loss, yet the pleasing thought that our loss is his gain greatly mitigates our sorrow, and causes light to arise in the darkness. Oh! that it may be sanctified to our mutual good; and cause us more practically to remember that this is not our home, but that we are pilgrims and strangers upon the earth. May we press on in our journey, and by faith and prayer seek a happier clime, where there will be no more night -- no more pain -- no more death. May you all find the grace of God sufficient; and while he chastens with one hand, O may he comfort and console with the other. May that God who has said, "leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widow trust in me," be your stay and support continually.

Through a mysterious chain of providences, we are now at Brother Early's, in this place, where we have been for nearly four weeks, detained by the affliction of our daughter Mary. We had started to fulfill a purpose that we have entertained for a number of years of removing to the west. We had started, and had gotten thus far on our way, when, unexpectedly, three of our children, Mary, Ann, and Sarah, were attacked with the scarlet fever. Ann and Sarah slightly, but Mary severely. This is the twentieth day since she was taken, and the disease has scarcely yet reached its crisis. Poor little creature, she has wasted away almost to a skeleton. If it be best, God can raise her up again. Pray for us. For the present, at least, we shall defer our journey, hoping that God will guide us by his Holy Spirit into all truth. "How mysterious are his ways, and his judgments past finding out." "O Lord, save us, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks to thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. We need much of your prayers that we may be guided in the good and right way. I would not take a step out of the order of Divine providence...

We had a good class-meeting this morning. A lot among the sanctified is still the prominent matter, I trust, that we have in view. Oh! that we may so live and rear our children, that we, with all our charge, may meet in heaven.

May the light of him who is above shine upon your path. The Lord be your shield and portion.

Yours affectionately,  
John W. Childs



Mr. Childs, in this attempt to remove to another Conference, acted in the fear of God, as in everything else he did; and when he saw the hand of the Lord closing up the way before him, he was ready to stand still, and see the salvation of God. For seven weeks little Mary seemed suspended between life and death, and by the time she began to recover, the autumn was advancing -- the Conference year was near its close, he determined therefore to wait her restoration to health, abandon the thought of a transfer, and go up to the Conference and take his appointment with his brethren.

Oct. 4th, he writes: "We have been confined in Lynchburg until yesterday afternoon, when for the first time we came out a few miles to Brother M\_\_\_\_\_'s, for the benefit of dear little Mary. She is still very feeble, though we trust improving gradually." Thus we see, for nearly two months they had been confined with their sick child. There was a voice in this providence that told upon the heart of Mr. Childs. He felt admonished by it and doubtless would gladly have retraced the steps that brought him into this deep water of affliction. But it had the effect to make him content with his field of ministerial labor.

Mr. Childs took occasion to carry his family into the bounds of the Bedford circuit, among his old friends, hoping that a temporary sojourn among them might promote the restoration of the health of his children, and at the same time allow him to interchange Christian salutations with a number of families that were much beloved by him. Besides, the Conference was near at hand, which was held that year in Lynchburg, and he did not deem it advisable, under all the circumstances of the case, to return to his circuit for the remainder of the year. While in Bedford, at the house of his particular friend Garland Poindexter, he wrote to Mrs. F., of Lynchburg, on the 22d Oct., giving an account of the cordiality of his old friends -- the pleasure he enjoyed in being thrown among them, and the success which had attended some of the meetings at which he had been present, in company with the Rev. J., who had charge of the circuit. He says --

"I have seen a number of my old friends in this circuit, and have been much pleased to meet with them, and I do hope that my spending my time in this way until Conference, visiting from house to house, and preaching as opportunity presents, will not be wholly unproductive of good.

"I think I can say my soul prospers in the Divine life, and my spirit, in some measure, feels invigorated to do the will of God."

On the approach of Conference, Mr. Childs returned with his family to Lynchburg, and attended the session, which turned out to be a stormy one. Difficulties which were supposed to be dead and buried, were found only to have been in a state of suspended animation. They sprang into life, apparently invigorated by the temporary suspension. On one occasion, during the most violent part of the heated and unfriendly controversy that agitated the whole body, a company of young men, looking down from the gallery of the church in which the Conference was held, saw Mr. Childs in a remote corner, down upon his knees, earnestly engaged in prayer. This was always his resort whenever thrown into the midst of danger, or whenever overtaken by sore trials, or beset with temptations. Prayer was his stronghold -- to this he flew for refuge amid all the calamities of life, and here he hid himself beneath the shadow of the Almighty, until the impending storm was overpast.

From this Conference Mr. Childs was assigned to the Campbell circuit, which lies immediately adjoining the town of Lynchburg, on the south side of the James river. This was a large circuit, embracing a tract of country extending from the James to the Staunton rivers, and from near the base of the Peaks of Otter, on the west, to the waters of the Appomattox on the east.

It was convenient for Mr. Childs to leave his family for a short time with their friends in Lynchburg, and enter at once upon his regular appointments, immediately on the adjournment of the Conference.

We have no material from which to supply the reader with any connected detail of his labors, or religious exercises while on the Campbell circuit. We only know that he entered fully into his work. He preached the word with great power, and God sanctioned it with the demonstration of the Spirit, and the conversion of sinners from the error of their ways.

His labors were chiefly directed in behalf of the membership of the church, and were blessed to a considerable extent. Much of his time was employed in his efforts to establish a parsonage on the circuit, which were happily attended with success. He soon obtained a subscription for this object of \$1000, which was applied to the purchase of a desirable house and lot within a mile of the town of Lynchburg. To this he removed his family at an early day, and found himself most comfortably situated for the year. He became very tenderly attached to his flock, who in return were devoted to him as their pastor and spiritual guide; and till the day of his death he cherished the most devoted Christian regard for many of the members on the Campbell circuit. It was a pleasant year to him in many respects; the only thing that made it otherwise, was the failure of the same measure of success which had attended his ministry in other places.

Living as he did near his family connections and friends, he seems not to have had any correspondent during the year; and strange to say, we have not been able to procure a single line from his pen during the whole time of his pastoral oversight of this circuit.

At the end of the year he attended Conference, and was again appointed to the Bedford circuit.

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## Chapter 17 BEDFORD CIRCUIT -- 1846-47

His Field of Labor -- Extracts from his Correspondence -- No extensive Revival -- Conference -- Return -- His peculiar Views -- End of the Year -- Recollections by J. D. Blackwell -- Conference -- Appointed to Brunswick circuit

Again we meet with Mr. Childs on the Bedford Circuit. Here he was no stranger. He was well acquainted with the people, and with the various localities within the bounds of his pastoral charge. Among these hills and valleys, and around these rugged mountains, he had previously spent two years of his ministry, in building up the church, and in calling sinners to repentance. His voice had been heard echoing among the rocks, and ringing through the forests, as he sang the songs of

Zion, and proclaimed the words of salvation in the midst of the gracious work that crowned his labors here in 1839. Everything was familiar to him on his return. He had gazed before upon the magnificent array of natural scenery that everywhere greeted his eye in the monthly tour of his circuit. He had seen the rocky summits of the lofty "Peaks of Otter" kindle with the first rosy blush of day, as the misty shroud was lifted from their giant shoulders by the fairy hand of morning. He had seen the evening twilight deepen into purple along the vales, and under the shadow of the mountains, while yet the "Peaks" shot up like burnished shafts in the golden light of the sunken sun. He had seen the last lingering pencil of light fade from the points of the rocks, and vanish like the lights of hope that momentarily cheer the path of life.

Here, in the midst of these familiar scenes and associations, we find him, directly after Conference, engaged in his regular work. His family were comfortably situated, at an early period, in the parsonage at Liberty; and although some of them were afflicted, yet Mr. Childs himself seems to have submitted without a murmur, and still pursued with unwavering step "the even tenor of his way."

We find but little variety in his correspondence during his stay upon the circuit; and the diary which he kept at the time was but partial, and even that was not preserved, but left in scattered fragments about the premises, to be read by accident and piecemeal by his successor on the circuit. Some of the stray leaves were picked up and read more than a year after he left the parsonage, which are said to have been of a most spiritual character -- almost too high for mortal attainment. We shall therefore make but a few extracts from his letters written during his pastoral oversight of the circuit in 1846 and '47, and hasten on to the conclusion of this biography.

May 25th he writes to a friend:-- "We should be thankful that it is as well with us as it is. In soul, I fear that we are far behind what we should be. Through mercy my bodily health is tolerably good, though I have nothing to boast of, and would remember that my life is but 'a vapor that appeareth for a very little while and then vanisheth away forever.' Oh! that we all, by a proper improvement of it -- brief as it is -- may insure a blissful immortality. I fear we are doing very little, in a religious point of view, though there are some drops of mercy here and there. Oh! how much do I need power from on high. The Lord send it down! If I know myself; I think I am striving to enter in at the strait gate. But how small my progress! I see a thousand imperfections; but still, blessed be the Lord, he is my portion, and sometimes I have enlivening hopes of reaching

'The goodly land,  
With peace and plenty blest.'

"I want more energy as a minister to administer wholesome church discipline. O Lord, assist me."

Again he writes to the same, June 9th:-- "If I understand my end and aim as a Christian, holiness is the object I have in view; and my prayer is that everything may conduce to this desirable end. Surely it is the will of God, even our sanctification; but how slow of heart are we to learn what our heavenly Father would teach us! O Lord, do not give us up to strong delusion, but show us the path of life, that we may see light in thy light, and have fellowship one with another;

and may the blood of Jesus cleanse us from all sin. Surely he is able to save to the uttermost. Oh! may we experience the height and depth, and length and breadth, of 'the great salvation!'

"You stated in your last that you had no comfort in reading the Scriptures. Yield not to the tempter. I would say, read them as the first book in the morning -- read them with fasting and prayer, as you are able; and above all, read with a determined resolution to practice what is therein taught. Oh! that we may have courage and resolution to bear the cross of Christ, and God surely will be with us; and in the mean time let us remember that Jesus bore all our sins in his body on the tree. As far as my poor experience goes, I find that public duties will not supply the place of private. May the Lord help us to imitate the example of the great Master. I would say, be resolved that you will devote so much time to private prayer each day. De Renty says, 'the less we visit our closets, the less the relish; the more frequently, the greater the sweetness there.'"

About the same time he wrote to another friend, in which he says: -- "We are not doing much on our circuit; perhaps it may be owing to our own want of vigilance and fidelity. The Lord make us more active, useful, and energetic; and may the work of the good Lord speedily revive.

July 21st, he writes to the same:-- "Everything here admonishes us, that here we have no continuing city. There is no paradise in this world, and our wisdom certainly is to seek one to come. Oh! that we may thus imitate the example of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who desired a better country, that is, a heavenly; on which account God was not ashamed to be called their God, for he had prepared for them a city. Though we know all this, how prone are we to forget it.

"I am striving to make some improvement in the divine life. The Lord remove every stumblingblock and hindrance out of the way."

The year passed away without any extraordinary work of grace on the circuit, yet not without the conversion of souls, and additions to the church. The summer and autumn, in their turn, glided by, and the Conference came on, without the occurrence of anything of particular note, connected with the history of Mr. Childs. The granite of the mountains around was not more stable and firm than he. Always the same honest, humble, devout Christian, and faithful minister of Jesus Christ.

He attended the session of the Conference held for that year, in the month of November, at Randolph Macon College, near the village of Boydton; from which he was returned to the Bedford circuit for the year 1847. He entered at once upon his work, and pursued it through the severity of the winter, with an energy that never tired, and a zeal that never waxed cold. He still held the same views as to the duty of self-denial and cross-bearing that we have seen exhibited in the previous portions of his life. But there is so little variety presented, either in his correspondence, or daily walk, that we deem it unnecessary to detain the reader with any detailed account of his year's labors.

April 22d, 1847, he says, in a letter to a particular friend:-- "We are not doing much on the circuit --

'I work, and own my labor vain,  
And then from works I cease;  
I strive and see my fruitless pain,  
Till God create my peace' --

or, rather, till he command us to let down the net on the right side of the ship, and then we shall enclose a multitude of fishes. Oh, may he hasten the time!

"I wish, sister, that I could see many things, if they are right, in a different light from what I do see them. But, I assure you my energies have been well-nigh paralyzed by many things that have occurred. Still God is my portion, and I feel that I love him, and I want to love him more, and serve him better."

July 10th -- He says, in a letter to a distant friend and relative of the family, "Our children seem to enjoy good health; oh, that we may be able to bring them up aright -- that their wills may early be subdued to their parents -- to Christ ... I feel that I am less than the least of all his saints, but he nevertheless condescends to bless even me. How necessary to live as we would wish to die, and so to die that we may rise triumphant in the resurrection of the just."

Mr. Childs was generally beloved on the Bedford circuit. He, however, was not without his enemies. In the discharge of his pastoral duties during the term of his service on the circuit, he was called upon to exercise discipline in certain cases, which excited the hostility of some persons against him. We shall learn, presently, the spirit in which he received and bore this opposition.

J. D. Blackwell was his colleague on the Bedford circuit in 1847; and in answer to a letter of inquiry, in relation to his impressions of Mr. Childs, he has kindly furnished us with the following communication, which we take pleasure in laying entire before the reader.

Dear Brother:-- I was with Mr. Childs on the Bedford circuit in 1847.

In the order of your questions, I give 1st, a statement of my recollection and impressions of the man as a Christian. His life evinced that he was sincere. While he professed to believe that temporal blessings were far inferior to the approbation of God, and the consequent hope of eternal bliss, he did not permit the things of time to engross all his thoughts, and command all his energies. Wherever he was, by whatever circumstances surrounded, his life was always in strict correspondence to his faith; in difficulties, through evil and good report, his conduct seemed constantly to proclaim, none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may have God's support in time, and his reward in eternity."

He was not an enthusiast -- he was a Bible Christian, and expected spiritual blessings only in the use of the means. He read the Scriptures frequently every day for devotional purposes, and prayed almost without ceasing. It was his practice to read the Bible on his knees, an hour every morning, and perhaps at night also.

On one occasion, when our presiding elder remarked to me in his presence, that the piety of a certain brother had been the occasion of his death while traveling on foot in a snow storm, Mr. Childs laid aside his studies, and knelt in prayer. When he arose he said, "Ah, brethren, we have but little to fear from excessive piety -- when men begin to spend whole nights wrestling in prayer to God it will be time enough then to warn them of the evils of excess."

His sincerity and consistency were shown in everything. When he bowed and prayed for a revival he arose and labored for it; when he cried to God for audience, he was careful not to "regard iniquity in his heart;" when he prayed to be forgiven, he forgave. But it is useless for me to say more here; his practice in reference to devotion is known to you. Suffice it to say, he guarded with a godly jealousy his own heart, in every point.

His attainments in religion were of the highest order. Love was the spring of his actions; so pure were all his motives that the man seemed almost a locomotive proclamation: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." He could pray for and love his enemies, and rejoice amid their persecutions.

By his decision, acquitting an accused member of crimes alleged against him, he procured the ill will of some who were hostile to the accused member. It so happened, that at the invitation of the teacher, Mr. Childs made an appointment to preach at a schoolhouse on the land of one of his enemies. The owner objected to the house being used for that purpose. He said to a neighbor, "I have no objection to preaching being had here, but Childs is not the man: he is a hypocrite; he tells lies." To prove the spirit of Mr. Childs, I stated to him literally, what I had heard; when he smiled very pleasantly. I remarked, "Brother Childs, it seems to please you." "Well, brother, the Scripture says, 'rejoice and be exceeding glad.' I am sorry that I should be an occasion of offense; but it is a great consolation to feel that I have a clear conscience.

2. As a Preacher and Pastor -- On this head I do not intend to say much.

He was certainly a sound, searching, faithful, practical preacher. There was not a particle of incoherent rhapsody in his discourses; he was a, systematic and clear expounder of his text. While he prayed for light, he studied for it also. He read often the standard writers of our church: and that he might have time for study, redeemed his hours from useless employment.

His reading was not sufficiently general, I think; yet such was his application, that the unstudious loungee in the ministry can find no countenance in his example. He studied to make himself a workman that needed not to be ashamed. And having thus learned his Master's will, he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God. This he did affectionately, frequently referring to the necessity laid upon him. Often have I heard him, when dealing plainly with his hearers, say, "Brethren, I must speak plainly; if I do not, I know that God will have a controversy with me."

As a pastor, I never expect to see his like again. He felt it his duty and pleasure to visit, whenever he could, the people of his charge. He talked with them, and with their children, (spes gregis), of duty and of heaven. He heard the complaint of their afflictions, and pointed them to the source of comfort; he exhorted them to holiness, and prayed with and for them every opportunity -- indeed, he seemed to make opportunities; he was instant "in season, out of season." I refer you to

Acts, 20th ch., 18th and 27th, and also 31st, 33d, and 35th verses, with this remark, that had you been with him on the Bedford circuit, you would doubtless agree with me, that that language is but a beautiful description of his spirit and labors while there. He was an apostolical man, and certainly in the succession.

3. As a Friend and Companion. As a friend he was of course faithful and true.

As a companion, he was decidedly pleasant and agreeable to all who did not permit a false notion of his austerity to drive them into an unconquerable reserve. His fixedness of purpose to gain heaven did not, as some supposed, draw off his thoughts entirely from earth. He would at times converse cheerfully of our worldly interests and employments, and would generally enliven his conversation by an appropriate quotation from some good author, and sometimes by an amusing and striking anecdote. Yet it was evident that all his words and acts, as so many converging lines, tended to one common point; all his prayers, study, labors looked directly to the advancement of the glory of God.

I will say nothing more, as I know but few incidents illustrative of his character; and my general impressions are only such as perhaps will be given you from other sources. What I have written I most cheerfully send you to be used just as you think proper.

With the best wishes for your success in your undertaking, I remain yours in Christ,

J. D. Blackwell

The Conference for this year was held at Charlottesville, near the University of Virginia. He attended the session, and took a more active part in its deliberations than usual for him. From the seat of the Conference he wrote to his wife, from which we make the following extract. After giving an account of his safe arrival in Charlottesville -- the health of the preachers, and other things by the way, he says, "What a world we live in! Oh! my dear Martha, let us properly improve our time and talents that we may get ready to live in another. My dear, watch over our children, and let us not take our example from those around us, but from the word of God, and the pious who have lived before. How earnestly should we offer up the prayer of the poet --

'Still stir me up to strive,  
With thee in strength divine.'

May we be renewed daily, and revived every moment. It is my wish that we should both be wholly given up to God -- body, soul, and spirit."

From this Conference Mr. Childs was assigned to the Brunswick circuit, than which no appointment in the Conference could have been more agreeable to him. It was one of the first circuits he traveled -- he had many warm friends within its bounds, and it was every way pleasant to his feelings to return to it, after an absence of about twenty years.

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## Chapter 18

### BRUNSWICK CIRCUIT -- 1848-49

Removes his family to the Parsonage at Lawrenceville -- Is pleased with his appointment -- Old friends -- Sickness in his family -- Unabating zeal -- Conference -- Returned -- Letter to Mrs. E. -- The work of the Lord revives -- Carries his daughter to college -- Letter to her -- The work of the Lord progresses -- Other letters to his daughter -- Year draws to a close -- He regrets to leave the circuit -- Strong attachments -- Conference -- Appointed to Gloucester circuit -- Further recollections by J. G. Claiborne

Mr. Childs' return to the Brunswick circuit was hailed with pleasure by the good people of that charge. Everything was put in readiness for his reception, and he forthwith, on the adjournment of Conference, removed his family to the parsonage, located at Lawrenceville, and entered immediately upon his regular work. The greetings of his old friends were pleasant to him, and the cordiality with which he was everywhere received by his people was exceedingly gratifying. He found, at nearly every appointment, members of the church who had been received by him as the fruits of the gracious revival that crowned his labors when he traveled the circuit in 1829. He had a heart for his work, and went at it in good earnest.

He was still intent in all his plans and purposes to save his own soul, while he labored for the salvation of others. Writing to a friend, December 20th, 1847, he says, "Oh! let us beware of suffering anything to fill up the capacity of the soul but Christ in God. May we dwell in him, and may he, by his word and Spirit, dwell in us."

To his mother-in-law, January 19th, 1848, he writes:--

"You have doubtless learned from the papers that we are sent to the Brunswick circuit this year. It is a circuit that I traveled about twenty years ago, at which time we had a gracious revival of religion. A few are still left who were alive then; but how many changes have taken place! How many have gone into eternity, and how soon we shall be gone! Oh, that we may be perfectly prepared for the change!

"We have a good parsonage, in a retired place, though sufficiently near to Lawrenceville to make it agreeable. We have met with kind friends, who have shown us many marks of Christian affection, for which we would praise the good Lord. May his blessing be upon them, and may our coming be profitable, both to them and to us, that the name of God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

In the early part of the year Mr. Childs had a good deal of sickness in his family, all of which he met with that resignation and quietness for which he was so remarkable. He saw and acknowledged the hand of God in all his providences, and believed him to be alike good in what he gives, permits, or withholds. He was ever steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. As the spring advanced the work of the Lord revived to some extent; and some sinners were converted to God.



Mr. Childs seems to have been very much pleased with his circuit. April 18th, he writes to a friend, -- "We have still very kind friends here; and if we could see the work of the Lord revive, I know of no circuit that I should be better pleased with. Do earnestly pray that the Lord may mightily revive his work of conviction, conversion, sanctification, and reclamation."

May 13th he writes to the same:-- "We have seen nothing special, or at least, to no great extent, in the circuit. Several have been converted, and a number of the colored people seem to be moved upon. Oh! that there may be a mighty work among both white and colored, and that the name of our God may be honored. But I fear iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. Lord God, arise, maintain thine own cause."

We can glean nothing of special interest or importance from Mr. Childs' correspondence during the remainder of the year. His spiritual condition seems to have continued such as we have seen it through the previous years of his religious life. He never swerved from his duty -- he never grew weary in his work. Onward, was his watchword. His habits of devotion were strictly kept up; and as he advanced in years he seemed rather to quicken his pace than lag by the way. He preached with great zeal and power, and the word of the Lord dispensed by him was instrumental in the accomplishment of the happiest results. It is true, that the additions to the church were not so numerous as had followed his labors in some of the former years of his ministry; but he did not labor in vain. The Lord gave him souls for his hire, and seals to his ministry.

His bodily health was better than it had been for some time past, and he was able to undergo more fatigue, and perform more work than usual for him; and this he did with a willing mind, and a thankful heart.

He spent a pleasant and happy year on the Brunswick circuit, in 1848, and went up to the Conference in an improved state of health, and in a comfortable state of mind. The session was held in the town of Elizabeth city, North Carolina, in the early part of the month of November. At the opening of the session he wrote to his wife, in which, after giving her information of his safe arrival at the seat of the Conference, the health of the brethren, the kindness of the family with which he was stopping, &c., he adds, "I hope you will earnestly pray that the good Lord may direct us in all things, by his word and spirit, and especially in reference to our next appointment. My dearest Martha, I hope you are better; and I would say, watch over the wills and tempers of our dear little ones with a vigilant eye. Oh! that God may help us to raise them up for himself."

The state of the health of Mr. Childs' family made it necessary for him to leave before the adjournment of the Conference; but while he remained he took a lively interest in the proceedings, and spoke more than once on a subject that engaged the attention of the Conference.

He was returned to the Brunswick circuit for the year 1849, which was every way agreeable to himself and family. Being already in the circuit, he was prepared, without an hour's delay, to enter on his work.

The following letter, written to Mrs. E., of Lynchburg, shortly after his return from Conference, will give the reader some tolerably correct idea of his spiritual state at the time of which we are now writing.

Lawrenceville, Va., Nov. 22d, 1848

Dear Sister E.: I trust this will find you and yours in the possession of health, and pursuing the things that are eternal. Oh! how important that we live every moment for eternity. Soon it will be said of us we are no more. May we bear the yoke of Christ while we have time and opportunity. The night cometh when no man can work. Oh! that we may work out our salvation 'while it is called today.'

I feel more and more my need of grace -- of humility in particular. I think that I have some; but I desire such a measure thereof as will enable me to witness that humiliations give me real pleasure. Surely this is our privilege as well as duty. Mr. Fletcher seems to have attained to this state. The Lord help us to follow him in this, as he followed Christ. I fear that this is not the mark aimed at by many. I know that we can all talk of an aunt Martin, [An eminently pious Christian, that had for many years been an ornament of the church in Lynchburg, and died most triumphantly.] and can speak well of her life, and our language is, "let me die her death;" but while we all "may like the purchase," yet "few are willing to pay the price," and this, doubtless, is the reason why there are so few "burning and shining lights." Oh! that the refining grace of God may make us altogether like him "who was meek and lowly in heart," that we might find the true and solid rest for our souls. Oh! to live in the continual victory of the grace of God. Bishop Asbury, in his Journal, professes to have enjoyed it. Surely, what others have enjoyed, is equally our privilege to attain unto.

I thank you for the work sent my daughter. I read it last summer, and was pleased, and I hope, profited. What she says about consecration is good; but the cross must be borne. "The preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness; but to them that are saved, it is the power of God." Oh, that this mighty power may work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure!...

Yours affectionately,  
John W. Childs

About the same date of the above, he wrote to his mother-in-law in Mississippi, in which he says: "We are sent back to the Brunswick circuit. They are a kind people; but I fear we are not so spiritual, as a church, as we should be. Pray that God may raise up the decayed places of Zion.

"May light shine on your tabernacle day and night. What is everything else compared to this! Soon time will be swallowed up in eternity! Oh, that ours may be a blessed immortality!

"We are still trying 'to hold faith and a good conscience,' though we find 'it is through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom of God.' But if we enter at last, we shall be amply compensated for all we suffer in this world.

'The rougher the way,  
The shorter the stay;  
The tempests that rise  
Shall gloriously hurry our souls to the skies.'

I pray that we all may safely enter the harbor of eternal repose at the last.

Mr. Childs now had a large family of children, and he seems to have felt an exceedingly lively interest in their mental culture. He found some difficulty in procuring for them the tuition that exactly suited his taste and religious views. Withal, he had a great deal of sickness in his family; and he had, necessarily, a large share of care and responsibility devolved upon him. Fortunately for himself, he enjoyed better health than usual, and was, by the blessing of God, enabled to sustain all his labors, and "in patience to possess his soul." He never neglected his work. His appointments were regularly met; and he laid himself out to the extent of his ability, in his ministerial and pastoral calling. The great Head of the church was with him, and his labor was not in vain in the Lord.

With the opening spring and summer, the work of the Lord revived, and precious seasons of refreshing visited various parts of the circuit. This was exceedingly cheering to the heart of Mr. Childs. Nothing delighted him more than to witness the increasing piety and zeal of the membership of his charge, and the return of sinners to God.

In the month of August he sent his eldest daughter to the Buckingham Female College, and placed her under the tuition and care of the Rev. J. C. Blackwell, the President of the Institution. Her removal from the parental roof led to a new correspondence, in which the views and feelings of Mr. Childs, as a father, are more fully developed than we have heretofore seen them.

It would be tedious, and unnecessarily enlarge the present work, to lay all his letters to his daughter, while at college, before the reader. It seems that he deliberated long, and prayerfully, before he determined on sending her to college, and then reserved to himself the right to prescribe the studies that she should pursue.

After leaving her at the institution, to which he carried her himself, he writes to her in a letter, dated August 15th, 1849: "My dear Margaret: Your father was sorry to leave you so soon, and felt much for you after he left. I hope you were able, in a proper spirit, to possess your soul; and that you have a good room, pleasant and profitable room-mates; that you are pleased with your teachers, fare, &c., and that you are making advancement in your studies. Strive, my dear, to improve, by employing all your time, though not to injure your health ... Oh! my dear Margaret, pray much, read your Bible attentively and diligently, and let this begin and end every day; and neglect not to stop awhile at noon for this purpose.

"Say to Mr. B\_\_\_\_ that we wish him to put you on a thorough English course. As you have commenced the French, you had better pursue it. If I saw the way, I should be glad to give you an opportunity to attend to other studies; but, at present, I do not."

Sept. 4th, he says to her: "We were gratified to hear from you, and that you were well. We hope that you will endeavor first, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Saviour; and, secondly, to make all the advancement possible in your studies.

"You are right in entering upon the English course, and the French; but music, my dear, is what I have my doubts about, and fear that it will seriously militate against your other studies. It is solid, useful learning, that I wish you to seek after. Try to dive to the bottom of every thing that you undertake, and rest not content with a smattering. Now, the time taken up with music, detains you from other and more important subjects; and besides, I do not feel able to meet the expense.

"My dear, it is your true good that I would earnestly pursue. This world is but a dream -- an illusion; our real home lies beyond the grave. Try and keep this imprinted on your heart continually ... My dear Margaret, let not the world ensnare you. Human hearts and looks both deceive us. Let your heart be a garden sealed to all but the Lord."

There was a gracious work of grace progressing on the circuit during the time of which we are now writing, and a considerable number of valuable additions were made to the church. In his letters he speaks of several persons by name, that he had had the happiness of seeing converted; and states in one, that about ninety had professed religion on the circuit. The good work continued until the close of the year; but we are not advised how many were gathered into the church.

Mr. Childs was strongly attached to the Brunswick circuit. In almost every letter he wrote to his friends, he says something of the kindness of his dear people, and expresses more than ordinary regret at the prospect of a separation from them. They were in his heart to live and die with them; but his duty called him away.

In closing up his work for the year, it was mutually painful to him and to his beloved charge to exchange the last, sad farewell. But he commended them to God, and the word of his grace, and they parted, not without hope of again enjoying each others' society in this life. How little did they think that in this expectation they were to be disappointed.

On the eve of his departure from the circuit he wrote a letter to his daughter, in which he speaks of his regret in leaving "the dear and kind friends" as he calls them, on the Brunswick circuit; and then says to her: "Endeavor, my dear child, to grow wiser, better, holier and happier every day you live. Consider that day as lost, in which you do not make some improvement both for this world and that which is to come. Be diligent in the improvement of your precious time -- be regular in the means of grace, and the good Lord will be with you. Above all, eye your blessed Saviour -- consider his example, his doctrine, his atonement for sinners, His Spirit that he has promised to them that believe; and the God of love and peace will be with you."

Having finished his work on the circuit, he left his family, and repaired to the seat of the Conference, held for that year, November 7th, in the town of Petersburg, from which place he wrote to his wife, at the commencement of the session, giving her an account of his trip, his safe arrival, his happiness in meeting with the brethren, the pleasant family in which he was quartered, &c., &c.; and then adds, "I pray the good Lord may be with you both in soul and body. As far as you can, my dear, try to subdue the wills of the children; but remember, it only can be done by patient perseverance in well doing. May the Lord help us to pursue this course.

To his daughter he wrote, at the same time:-- "I send you by Brother B\_\_\_\_ a bundle sent you by your mother, and a pair of shoes, which I hope will fit. But, above all, my dear Margaret,

try to get a new heart, and 'your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.' Oh! may you so live as always to have the approbation of God, and also the good-will of your teachers."

From this Conference Mr. Childs was assigned to the Gloucester circuit, lying on the north side of the York river, in the lower part of Virginia. This was the last appointment that he received at the hands of the Conference. How little did he or his brethren think, when they separated at Petersburg, at the close of the session, that they had met for the last time.

In the early part of this biography we laid a part of a communication before the reader, written by the Rev. John G. Claiborne, of Brunswick, promising the remainder at a later period in the life of Mr. Childs. As it relates especially to his life and labors while on the Brunswick circuit, we here insert it, as an appropriate close to this chapter. Mr. Claiborne says:--

"By the Conference in November, 1847, he was again appointed Pastor of the Brunswick circuit. Twenty years had transpired since his separation from us, yet the savor of his name, and the fruits of his ministry were still fresh in the church, and his return was welcomed by the hearty congratulations of the brethren.

"With his accustomed promptitude he was soon in position, and with activity and earnestness he commenced the offices of his ministry. Time and grace had matured and mellowed the fruits of the Spirit in him, and patience had imparted experience to zeal.

"Moreover, he had become a husband and a father, and his affections, exercised in these relations, had expanded to a larger circle, in which, however, they ever and anon returned to the great center of religious devotion, fraught with the offerings of gratitude and praise. He had more regard to temporal interests than formerly, but not less devotion to spiritual and eternal things. He had acquired by grace the mastery over his affections, and as a generous master he relaxed the severity of discipline by which he had subjected them. The prominent features of his early character still identified the man; and, though softened by conjugal and paternal fondness, they distinctly expressed 'Holiness to the Lord,' as his distinguishing characteristic.

"His sermons were more rhetorical than formerly, but still they were enforced by the sanction of 'Thus saith the Lord.' In fact, he was so conversant with the Scriptures, and had so carefully and habitually appropriated their phraseology to the expression of his thoughts, that he rarely spoke his own words, but adopted the words of Holy Writ as the vehicle of all his communications, ecclesiastical and social. His sermons were generally doctrinal, impressive and practical, and always profitable to edify and minister grace to the hearers. His hymns and spiritual songs were well selected, chaste and rich in pious sentiment, and rarely failed to elevate the devotional affections of the heart. I never heard from him one of those vulgar ditties which sensualize our Psalmody, and mock the soul's aspirations to mingle its notes with the melody of Heaven.

"In the classroom and family circle he was faithful, fond and feeling; and few ever enjoyed these interviews with him who did not desire to repeat them.

"In his contact with families he sought so to associate religion with household offices, as to win the hearts of the children to their Father in Heaven, and the obedience of the servants to their Divine Master; and I take this opportunity to publish my testimony in vindication of his character from the imputation of abolitionism, that modern fanaticism, which, Uzza-like, assumes to anticipate the providence of God, and to direct and drive the chariot of his grace. To this spirit our brother Childs had no affinity; to this enterprise his mission did not extend; he recognized but one servitude, and esteemed that only liberty wherewith Christ doth make free. On this subject I had often full and frank conversation with him; and, slaveholder as I am, and justifying as I do this relation, I fully endorse his opinion on this subject.

"He continued pastor of this circuit two years, -- ever present at his post -- faithful to his duties; and copiously anointed with the unction of the Holy Spirit, he was, and could not but be, distinguished as instrumental in diffusing the knowledge of God, and in building up the church in its most holy faith.

"We parted with him as before, assured that we never knew a holier man, or a more faithful minister of God. Indeed, he cautiously avoided those positions, in which the remarkable incidents of life occur, and like the holy patriarch of old, he is most distinguished, as well as best described, by the brief statement, 'He walked with God, and is not, for God hath taken him.'

"Commending your generous design to publish his life, for the benefit of his family, I herewith contribute my humble prayer, that it may glorify God, in honoring his deceased servant, edify the church, and minister consolation and aid to our bereaved sister and her fatherless children. I herewith enclose three letters from our beloved brother; I had many others, but cannot lay my hands on them. Together with this communication they are submitted to your disposal; when they have served the purpose to which they are adapted, please return them to me.

"Very truly and affectionately your brother in Christ,

John G. Claiborne"

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## Chapter 19 GLOUCESTER CIRCUIT -- 1850

Leaves Lawrenceville -- Starts to Gloucester -- Leaves his family on the way -- Letter to his daughter -- Letter to Mrs. E. -- Visits the circuit to prepare for the reception of his family -- Letter to his wife -- Difficulty in procuring a suitable parsonage -- Removes to the circuit -- Rapid development of consumption -- Unable to preach -- Confined at home -- Reflections -- Winter passes away -- Preparations to go to Norfolk -- Rev. James E. Joyner's letter -- Arrives in Norfolk -- Carried to his brother's -- Medical attention -- Conversations -- Resignation -- Closing scene -- Remains carried to Lynchburg -- Funeral discourse by Rev. G. W. Langhorne -- Burial

On the adjournment of the Conference in Petersburg, Mr. Childs returned to the parsonage at Lawrenceville, and made arrangements for his departure to his new appointment.

On his way to Gloucester he passed through Petersburg, where he spent the Sabbath in the family of Mr. Peter Boisseau; and, although very much indisposed, he preached in the evening, at the High Street church. From Petersburg he went out into the country to the house of his highly esteemed Christian brother, Charles Friend, where he designed leaving his family until he could visit his circuit and make arrangements for their reception and accommodation.

While at Petersburg, he commenced a letter to his daughter, which he concluded at Mr. Friend's, from which we make the following extract:-- "We left the friends in Brunswick with reluctance, for many of them were very kind. May the good Lord give them an hundred-fold in this world, and in the world to come give them life everlasting."

November 28th, Wednesday, he adds: "We are now at Brother Friend's. We left Petersburg on yesterday. Brother and Sister B\_\_\_\_ were very kind to us during the few days of our sojourn with them.

"I hope, my dear Margaret, that you are still striving 'to enter in at the strait gate.' May you see the way of holiness and aspire after it with zeal; and remember this is the mark of the prize of our high calling.

"I have been quite unwell ever since we left Brunswick. I hope, however, if it be best, that I may recover; but I desire in everything to say, 'The will of the Lord be done; even so, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.' Oh! may he come to save and bless on earth, and then take us to heaven.

Your affectionate father,  
"John W. Childs"

Before leaving Mr. Friend's, he wrote the subjoined letter to Mrs. Early:--

At Rev. C. W. Friend's, Chesterfield County, Dec. 3d, 1849

Dear Sister E.:-- This will inform you that we are thus far on our way to our destined field of labor. I have been a good deal unwell since Conference, but hope I shall get better. I expect to start for Gloucester tomorrow. I shall leave my family at Brother Friend's for the present.

I know not whether our appointment will be a profitable one or not. I trust I had no hand in it, and therefore I feel the more resigned to Divine providence. I know that in a thousand instances we know not what is really for our good.

There is no parsonage on the circuit, and I cannot tell what difficulties there may be in our way; but we trust the good Lord will provide, and that all things will work together for our good.

We have certainly left many dear friends in Brunswick that have given us many proofs of their Christian kindness. Our residence there was a very agreeable one.

I see a thousand imperfections in myself; not that the Gospel is not sufficient to purify; but, alas! poor man is so weak -- so inconstant. I am sure if I were more dutiful and diligent, that God would give me a thousand proofs of his faithfulness, his providence, and grace, that are now obscured by the partial and uneven obedience that I render. Oh! that he would forgive all that is past, and enable me to see how odious sin is, in whatever covert way it may present itself to the soul; and God grant me strength to repel it, whether presented secretly or openly. Oh! I long for holiness -- for purity. It is this that I pant after more than after gold or silver, or the cattle upon a thousand hills. May he give me the desire of my heart.

Whether our low-country circuit will be for good or ill is problematical. Pray that God may overrule it for the good of our souls and bodies. The salt air, the change of diet, &c., who can tell but God may sanctify them strangely for our good? Oh! had we the spirit of Charles Wesley when he sang --

"Welcome alike the crown or cross --  
Trouble I cannot ask, or rest,  
But ever groan,  
Father, thy only will be done."

May it be accomplished by us, in us, and through us; by the thoughts of our hearts, by the words of our lips, by the works of our hands, and by the actions of our lives. Pray earnestly for us, that our Redeemer may uphold us continually. "Unsustained by thee we fall." Lord, hold us up in our goings. Our love to everyone.

Affectionately yours in Christ,  
John W. Childs

This is the last letter he wrote to his Lynchburg correspondent.

Mr. Childs left his family at Mr. Friend's, in Chesterfield county, and set out, on horseback, for the Gloucester circuit. He spent the first night in Richmond, and at the close of the second day from Richmond, he reached the house of Mr. Jefferson Stubbs, the recording steward of the Gloucester circuit. From Mr. Stubbs' he wrote to his wife, giving an account of his trip and the prospects before him. He says:--

"I left Richmond early yesterday morning; traveled all day without getting anything to eat, and had to put up at a tavern at night. I was treated kindly, and for my fare had to pay one dollar and a quarter, which I thought very reasonable, considering they gave me a clean bed, &c. I crossed the Mataponi a little after sunrise this morning, and have traveled, say thirty-seven miles, to get here an hour by sun ... I cannot as yet say anything about our prospects. Oh! may God open the way for us."

The above was written on the evening of December 7th. Saturday morning, December 8th, he adds -- "Oh! could we get that spirit that teaches us to be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make our requests known to God. Oh! my dear Martha, could we do this, how much more holy, how much more happy should we be. Lord, give



us this spirit for the sake of Jesus. My cough gets no better; though I hope, if it can be best, it will pass away.

"There is no chance for us to go to housekeeping before the first of January. Possession of the house cannot be obtained before that time."

There was no parsonage on the Gloucester circuit, and the stewards had to rent and furnish a house for the occupancy of Mr. Childs' family. They found it difficult to procure a desirable location, and were compelled at last to rent an ineligible and uncomfortable dwelling, but it was the best that could be done at that time.

The aspect of affairs was rather gloomy and discouraging to Mr. Childs. The winter was setting in; his family was large, and at a considerable distance from his circuit; some time must elapse before a parsonage could be provided for him; great inconvenience must necessarily attend his removal to the circuit; and withal his health was rapidly failing. But these things did not move him.

At an early day he succeeded in getting his family to the circuit, and was kindly received into the house of Mr. Jefferson Stubbs, who generously proposed to entertain them until the parsonage could be prepared for their use.

Mr. Childs' health began to decline at a fearful rate, and by the time the house was in partial readiness for his reception, his cough had become so troublesome that he could not even conduct family worship or read aloud but with the greatest inconvenience.

The first quarterly meeting for the circuit was held at Christmas. Mr. Childs was barely able to attend; he, however, was present, and, at the request of the presiding elder, consented to preach. He was seriously interrupted by his cough while attempting to deliver his sermon, and was compelled at last to close rather abruptly. This was his last sermon. At that time, however, but little apprehension was entertained that his indisposition was likely to terminate seriously. He was necessarily exposed, more or less, in getting settled in his new home, in the midst of an inclement season, which aggravated the symptoms of his disease; and it was not long before it was apparent that consumption [pulmonary tuberculosis] had marked him as a victim, and that the disease was making most fearful and rapid inroads upon his constitution, and hastening to a mortal crisis. Medical aid was called in, and everything was done that could be, under the circumstances, to arrest his malady and preserve his life. But every exertion was baffled by the insidious foe; and his wasting flesh, his drenching night sweats, his daily chills and fevers, and shocking cough, proclaimed, in no doubtful terms, that his dissolution was rapidly approaching.

The brethren and friends on the circuit were exceedingly kind; but the parsonage, unfortunately, was remote from them, being in one corner of the circuit, and they could not therefore show that constant attention, by day and night, that they otherwise would have done. But the lack of a service of this sort was happily supplied by a sister of Mr. Childs, Mrs. Sarah Jacobs, of Alexandria, who was constantly with him, and who waited upon him with a devotion and tenderness that cannot be spoken of in terms of too high commendation. Her attentions greatly relieved the labors of the affectionate wife, who watched over him, like an angel of mercy, amid

all his sufferings; yet often with an almost breaking heart, as she could not at all times conceal from herself the painful termination to which his disease was hastening. This was a season of trial to the faith of Mr. Childs.

There he was, in a cheerless and uncomfortable dwelling, scantily furnished, and remote from the members of his charge; and this, too, in mid-winter. There, with a sorrowing wife, surrounded by five small children, he lingered, growing worse and worse with each succeeding day. There he spent his days and restless nights, with gradually diminishing hopes of the prospect of recovery. See him, pale and emaciated, lying upon his bed, unable to assist himself and without strength to conduct family prayer. He turns his eyes upon a new supply of books which he had procured for his winter's reading, and recalling his previous arrangements for increased labors and studies, he says: "Man may plan, but God frustrates." It is night, and the weary watchers have all fallen asleep. His little ones have lost their petty cares in their midnight slumbers. The winds are whistling around his lonely dwelling, as the snow-flakes patter against the window and upon the roof. And there he lies, the only wakeful inmate of that dwelling. His thoughts are busy. Memory has traveled over the past, and gathered up the recollections of other days, while the dark and impenetrable future is crowded with the dim and indistinct images of coming events, that already "cast their shadows before." He feels that a few days more must end his earthly career -- that soon his wife must be a widow, and his children orphans -- that they must be left without a home, and without the means of support.

What think you, reader, were his feelings while pressed with these reflections? Suppose you that he was gloomy and desponding, or that he murmured at the Providence that had placed him in that condition? Far from it. His mind was stayed upon the Most High, and his heart was often swelling, "unutterably full of glory and of God." The midnight silence of his chamber was broken by the rapturous expressions of heavenly joy, and by sentiments of the most perfect acquiescence in the dealings of his heavenly Father. "The will of the Lord be done," was uttered by him a thousand times; and a word of complaint never escaped his lips, as the following conversations with his wife, committed to writing by her at the time, fully prove:--

"Gloucester, April 10th, 1850 -- My dear husband seems to be declining, but his trust is unshaken. With much feeling he said to me, 'My dear, I do not know what the Lord intends doing with me; he knows I love him, and would serve him if spared; but I want to be resigned, and serve him in my affliction. I have the comfort to know that the course I have pursued was, to cut off all occasion to turn aside, and to do all the good I could.'

"At another time he said, 'My dear Martha, pray for me; I find it very hard to give you and the children up. I want the will of God to be done; if it be best, I would be glad to live to see them provided for.' At another time he asked me to read the fourth chapter of Philippians. When I read the sixth verse, he said, 'My mind has been dwelling upon that.'

"A few weeks before we left Gloucester, I ventured to ask him how he felt in view of being taken from us, when he replied, 'It is a trying situation, but God will do what is right; we are commanded to leave our fatherless children to him, and let our widows trust in him.'"

He does not seem to have anticipated at first that his disease was likely to prove fatal; and when at last it became manifest to himself that his restoration to health was extremely doubtful, he was never heard to say more than that, if it was best for him and his family, he would like to get well; but, "Not my will," concluded all his remarks on this subject.

As the spring came on, some little hope was indulged that he might again rally for a while, and at least be able to visit his friends in the upper country. But all these hopes were disappointed. It was thought advisable to move him from the parsonage to the city of Norfolk, where he could daily command the attention of physicians to an extent he could not in the country; and where, in the event of his death, it would be more convenient for his family to communicate with their friends than if they were to remain at Gloucester. Arrangements were accordingly made, under the direction of his physicians, for his removal to Norfolk.

A few days before he left the parsonage he was visited by the Rev. James E. Joyner, the presiding elder of the district, who had a full and free conversation with Mr. Childs, and who has kindly furnished us with the following account of this interview:--

"On my first visit to the Gloucester circuit after Conference, I found Mr. Childs very much indisposed; a most distressing cough racking his whole system, and indicating a deeply seated disease of the lungs. From the nature of the symptoms, the most painful apprehensions were awakened in my mind as to his recovery. He, however, did not seem to apprehend any danger, nor did his family at that time, so far as I know. This was at Christmas.

"The next time I saw him my fears were fully confirmed. I saw, I felt then, that his time was short -- that his work and weariness would soon end, and he receive his faithfully sought reward, and mingle with the blest above.

"On the day before he left Gloucester for Norfolk, I visited him again, and found him exceedingly feeble. He was evidently then fast sinking under the ravages of his disease, into the cold embrace of death. He was, however, calm, and able to speak distinctly, so as to converse, which he did with remarkable clearness -- said he thought he was better than he had been, and felt as if he would like to get up and dress. 'Do you,' said he, 'think it would be imprudent for me to do so?' I told him I thought it would; that he was too weak, and that it might injure him. 'Then,' said he, 'I won't do it.' After pausing a moment he said, very solemnly, 'Brother, I have been wanting to see you very much; the doctor has prescribed porter for me to drink, and recommends French brandy, and I fear that it would be wrong for me to use them; what do you think about it?' And upon my telling him that these things were often used as medicine; and when used for that purpose purely, under circumstances of necessity, and particularly when prescribed by an intelligent physician, I did not think there would be anything wrong in taking them. He replied, 'I am now very low; life with me is extremely uncertain; I know not what moment I may go.' And here he paused for some time, while a flood of tears burst from his sunken eyes; then he said, 'My brother, I wish to go into the presence of my God with my spirit pure. I cannot go there with my spirit and senses stupefied with these corrupting stimulants. God is holy! Heaven is holy! and I, if I would dwell there, must be holy too!'

"Here the conversation turned upon the duties and trials of the ministry, in which he most earnestly urged holiness of heart and life as absolutely necessary to render our ministrations successful in the conversion of perishing sinners, and acceptable to God, our final judge. In this conversation I felt the deepest interest. His thin, cold hand pressed mine, while he most sublimely talked; he talked of holiness -- of God -- of the ministry, and its fearful responsibilities -- of death, and of dying -- of heaven -- of the crown of glory, and of eternal felicity in the bright abode of God above.

"This was done in a manner which, excepting one case, exceeded anything that I have ever heard or witnessed. I was absorbed, yea, overwhelmed with feelings of unutterable emotion. The impression made at this time on my mind and heart, I shall never forget; the precise words, however, I cannot now remember.

"He next spoke of his family -- of leaving his dear wife and children, in the most tender and affectionate terms. This was indescribably affecting. No murmur -- no word of complaint was heard to escape his lips. He said -- 'if it should be the will of God,' he would like to live to rear and educate his children. But in this, he said -- 'not mine, but the will of the Lord be done.' 'He will do right; and if it is his will that I shall go now, I am perfectly willing. I know that the Lord will take care of my wife and little ones. They will be provided for.' His confidence on this subject was truly remarkable: I have never known anything like it. In the view of his faith, it seemed a positive certainty. And in regard to his own experience, at this time, not a cloud shaded the celestial prospect -- all was bright. On being asked what was his state of mind, he said, 'I have not one doubt of my acceptance.'

"The thought of leaving his circuit seemed to give him more trouble of mind than anything else. He spoke of his work with the deepest interest, and of the brethren of the circuit with the warmest possible affection. Thanked them for their kindness toward himself and family, during his protracted illness.

"It was now time for me to leave. I bade him farewell, under a solemn conviction that it was the last time I should press that hand in this world. He held me by the hand with a trembling grasp, and said -- 'Farewell! my dear brother. God bless you! I shall never see you again in this world.' Here emotion choked his utterance -- he wept, and said -- 'I shall never see my dear brethren of the Virginia Conference again, until we meet above. Tell them farewell for me -- tell them I love them much, and that I die in peace with God and all men -- tell them I feel myself under many obligations to them for their kind forbearance towards my many imperfections -- tell them to live holy, and be entirely consecrated to God. Farewell, brethren! farewell all! I hope to meet you all in heaven at last.'

"Many other things were said by him, which I cannot now recall. It was a most solemn and deeply affecting interview.

"I can only add in conclusion that he was a most truly devoted minister -- a most pious and holy Christian, and that he, no doubt, reigns with the brightest saints above.

Yours truly,

James E. Joyner"

Suitable arrangements being made under medical direction, on Wednesday, the 1st day of May, Mr. Childs was taken from the parsonage, and, attended by sympathetic friends, was conveyed in a comfortable carriage to the house of Mr. Nutall, in the neighborhood of the steamboat landing in Matthews county, to be in readiness for the boat the next day, plying between that place and the city of Norfolk.

On the road, during the day, they passed one of the churches belonging to the Gloucester circuit. Mrs. Childs said to him -- "Husband, if God sees best to lay you aside, and no longer work by you, are you willing?" He promptly replied, repeating it over and over again, "Perfectly willing!" -- "Perfectly willing!" and this he did, says Mrs. Childs, "with a look of submission I can never forget."

He had a comfortable night's repose, and the next morning felt invigorated and refreshed. On the arrival of the boat he was placed on board, and without the least fatigue from his journey, reached the wharf at Norfolk, about 9 o'clock on the night of the 2d of May. From the wharf he was carried on a cot, by four men, to the house of his brother, Capt. William Childs, living on Catharine Street.

The author saw him early on the morning of the 3d of May. He was wasted to a skeleton, and looked more like a corpse than a living man. When I entered the room and took him by the hand, he was affected to tears. I sat down by his bedside, for he was not able to raise himself from his pillow, and engaged in conversation with him in relation to his affliction, and various other topics; but finding his strength to fail, I desisted for awhile, until he was sufficiently rested to continue the conversation. I then turned to him again, and inquired after the state of his mind, in the midst of his deep and protracted illness. I found him perfectly calm and tranquil, with his heart and mind stayed upon God. I told him that having known something of his views of the providence of God -- of faith and Christian experience, I was anxious to know whether all held good in affliction? He replied that he found God faithful to all his promises; that he believed all was right and just as it should be.

I then alluded to the condition in which his family would be left, in the event of his death, and asked him, if, when he looked upon his wife and six children, dependent upon him, and looking up to him for counsel, direction, and support, he did not feel tempted to doubt the wisdom and goodness of the providence that had placed him in his helpless condition? he promptly answered, "No!" and then went on to say, that the good Lord seemed to hold the Devil at bay -- that he tried to approach him, but was restrained; and then added -- "I am not even tempted to distrust the promises, the goodness, and faithfulness of God. It is all right!" he continued -- "I know it is all as it should be."

He then went on to say, that he had never murmured or rebelled against any appointment which had been assigned him in the Conference -- that he had always taken his work, trusting in God, and doing the best he could. "But," said he, "from the time I received my appointment to the Gloucester circuit there has been a cloud over my mind." He did not know why it was so.

Our conversation was here interrupted by the call of the physicians that had been summoned to his bedside.

In the afternoon of the same day we conversed again. The interview was pleasant, and at his request was closed with prayer. He responded warmly and repeatedly to the petitions addressed to the throne of grace. It was the same voice that, sixteen years before, I had heard in the tented grove, at the family altar, and in the forest chapels of Western Carolina. How strange the providence of God! The youth that he then counseled and took by the hand was now his spiritual adviser and counselor.

His physicians pronounced his disease consumption [pulmonary tuberculosis] in an advanced stage, and did not hesitate to say that it was incurable by human means -- that he might rally for a short time, but that there was not the remotest prospect of his recovery.

May 4th -- He was very calm, and even happy. He again said, whatever mystery might seem to hang about his case, it was all right. Said he, "I have no choice or will in the matter. God knows what is best. 'Whether I live, I live unto the Lord, or whether I die, I die unto the Lord; whether I live, therefore, or die, I am the Lord's.'" And as he slowly and solemnly repeated these words, his eyes overran with tears, showing how truly and deeply he felt what he uttered. We prayed together again, and he joined most heartily in the petitions. He seemed altogether beyond the reach of the Tempter. Such calmness, such meekness, such patience, and such resignation combined, we have never witnessed before or since, in mortal man. He said that he could desire to live to do something for his family, and for the church, were it in his power, but that he desired to live for no other purpose; and, said he, "if God does not see that it is best for me to live, I had rather die now?" "The will of the Lord he done," closed every conversation upon the subject. Again and again he said he had no fear of death -- that he dreaded his grave as little as he dreaded his bed.

On Sabbath, May 5th, he was visited by a number of his pious friends and acquaintances, among whom were his brethren in the ministry -- Overton Bernard, and Vernon Eskridge of Portsmouth; both of whom he had known for many years -- the latter having entered the Conference with him. His interviews with them were touching and impressive.

The same quietness and habitual trust in God, which had marked all the stages of his affliction, were still manifest. And for everyone who visited him, he had an appropriate word -- something to impress the mind and affect the heart, and lead to some good practical result in the life.

Monday, May 6th [1850] -- From daylight this morning, until 9 or 10 o'clock, he was thought to be dying. For a while he seemed rapidly sinking. His wife was weeping by his bedside, and could not be comforted; but he seemed but little affected by what was passing, while he was perfectly sensible of everything. He was asked, "Is Christ still precious?" "Oh yes!" he replied, "He is good -- I have no fear -- all is right!"

He was told that he appeared to be rapidly sinking, and that if he had any business to transact, or any messages to leave, or directions to give, he had better do it at once, as the power

of speech might fail him. He remained perfectly composed, and said that he had no business of a worldly nature to transact -- that he had always believed that God would take care of him and his, while engaged in His work; and that he had no temporal concerns to trouble him -- he had no worldly goods to dispose of. As to a message for the Conference, he had delivered that to Brother Joyner, his presiding elder, before leaving Gloucester.

He remained silent for a few moments, and then said:-- "There is but one thing that rests with any weight on my mind -- I was not able to see as the majority of my brethren on the subject of the division of our church; and at the time the vote was taken in our Conference, upon the subject of division, in 1845, I retired from the Conference room before the vote was taken, and did not remain to express my views in opposition to the measure, and to record my vote." He then added with emphasis:-- "I am no abolitionist; and if my vote now would liberate the whole slave population in the South, I could not give it, as I know it would inflict, under existing circumstances, the greatest evils upon them. Yet I did not see sufficient reason for separation; and I have sometimes feared that I, at least, appeared to shrink from my duty, in failing to give my views on the occasion referred to, and voting in opposition to the measure." This he said was the only thing on his mind. It had been a source of some trouble to him, but that now he felt entirely relieved.

His wife remarked that she feared the enemy was trying to take advantage of him in relation to this subject. "No," said he, "it gives me no trouble; but as I had thought of it, I felt that I should mention it -- it gives me no trouble now."

He still continued to linger at the very point to die. His wife was in great distress, and in her agony she said: "My dear, dear husband, if you are about to leave us, do say something as a parting message -- let your blessing be given to me." He responded with the utmost composure: "The everlasting arms shall be underneath and round about you -- of that I am very sure."

"Have you no message for dear Margaret?" their absent daughter, said she. "Tell her to be a good girl, and obedient," he replied. All this he said without the least apparent excitement or emotion.

"Do you know us all?" one inquired. "Perfectly," said he; "as well as I ever did; and I hear every word that is spoken."

His wife then asked him if he felt as though he were dying. He simply replied:-- "Martha, don't press that question -- I don't want to give you any trouble or distress."

His extremities were cold and clammy -- he could scarcely swallow, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could speak to make himself understood. All around believed that he was really dying -- that in a few moments the struggle would be over.

He was asked if he had any particular wish to express in relation to his burial. He replied:-- "I want nothing fantastic about it. Let everything be plain -- very plain -- plain in the Christian sense of the word." As to the place of his burial, he was indifferent. "Let Martha have her wish," said he. "I feel but little concern about it." He then remarked -- "I feel that I am sinking away as quietly and peacefully as the sun goes down."

Several brethren in the ministry called to see him while in this state -- J. D. Coulling, Robert Michaels, William H. Starr, Wesley Rhor, and the Rev. Anderson of the Presbyterian church. To each of the brethren to whom he spoke, he said something indicating his unshaken confidence in God, and his perfect resignation to the divine will.

As the day advanced he gradually grew warm, under powerful stimulants; and in the evening he seemed much better -- conversed with more strength, and said he felt entirely easy and comfortable. His mind was still at rest -- his peace was uninterrupted. After he was placed on his bed for the night, he requested that we should join in prayer with him. J. D. Coulling led in prayer, and, as usual, he responded "Amen!" to many of the petitions, with an earnestness and fervor that was truly astonishing.

When we parted with him for the night, he devoutly implored the blessings of God upon us, thanking us most kindly for our attentions. Indeed, there was nothing done for him for which he did not express his thankfulness and gratitude.

Tuesday, May 7th [1850] -- He continued gradually to waste away -- growing weaker, and yet more weak, with every hour. When J. D. Coulling and myself entered his room this morning, we found him in a quiet, peaceful state of mind. He said he felt perfectly easy, and free from pain; and then remarked:-- "When you all thought me dying yesterday morning, I was perfectly tranquil and happy -- I had the most perfect peace -- a happiness that is indescribable."

His wife then asked him how he felt. "Why," said he, "I am calmly stayed on my Redeemer." He was asked again if he had any fear of death. "Not the least," he replied. "Do you still feel that all is well, and that your way is perfectly clear?" "Perfectly," he answered. "I love God, and feel that I can trust him, and I believe all is well." He then remarked, that, during the whole period of his affliction, nothing had given him the least trouble, except the matter that he alluded to the day before, "and that," said he, "gives me no trouble now."

He was told by his wife that his attending physicians found him sinking under a highly stimulating treatment, and that they indulged no hope of seeing him rally again. He heard her with his usual composure, and simply remarked, "Do what the doctors have directed."

He never failed to ask the brethren, who visited him, to pray with him; and he always united with them, manifesting the warmest interest in all these approaches to the throne of grace.

While alone, during the day, his wife told him that she wished to ask him a few questions. She then referred to the fact that, during his whole sickness he had spoken with the greatest confidence with regard to his faith that God would, in the event of his death, provide for her and the children; and then she inquired, "Do you still feel confident that I and the children will be taken care of?" He answered, "I know my Father and God will take care of you." She then asked, "Have you no message to leave me, and the dear children?" "My LIFE," he replied, "WHAT MORE CAN I SAY!"



He had previously told her to "bring up the dear children indifferent to show and the fashions of the world."

She then asked him, what portions of the Scriptures he regarded as most interesting and pleasant; He intimated that he disliked to make any discrimination, but then remarked, "The gospel and epistles of St. John -- the first three chapters of Revelation, and the last, -- but all is good."

In the afternoon of this day he again revived, took his nourishment freely, and seemed every way much better. But as the night approached he again relapsed, and it was thought doubtful whether he would live till morning. He however said he was perfectly easy, and that he felt very well. He was asked if he felt as though he were near eternity? "I am in the hands of God," he answered, "and am perfectly willing to live or die, whichever he shall judge best."

While I was present he took an egg prepared with a little milk and two tea-spoonfuls of brandy, which was his only nourishment. After he had taken it, he extended his hand to me, and drawing me down to him, said, "Do you think I do wrong in taking that egg with brandy?" He was told that there could be no more harm in taking that small amount, under the direction of his physicians, than there was in taking the camphor, spirits of turpentine, and other stimulants which they had been administering for the last twenty-four hours. But his mind was not entirely easy on the subject.

In all his changes, he remained the same; always composed -- always peaceful and happy. He seemed to linger on the confines of two worlds, ready at any moment to obey his master's summons to the skies, and yet willing to suffer on till his change should come. He slept sweetly during the night, and whenever he awoke for a moment he gave utterance to some pious sentiment of resignation to the Divine will, or breathed out some petition to God.

Wednesday, May 8th [1850] -- This morning he refused to take his nourishment prepared with brandy, saying that he did not wish to leave the world and go into the presence of his Maker with his mind excited by intoxicating liquor; and it was only upon the assurance of his physicians that the small portion of brandy with which his nourishment was prepared could not possibly affect his mind, that he consented to continue its use. He was strenuously opposed to taking any stupefying or stimulating draught that might produce any unnatural effects, or lead to any expression that might not be relied on as a true and exact representation of his real state of mind.

He seemed disinclined today to say anything in relation to his death and burial, in the presence of his wife. This evidently arose from his dislike to give her the slightest pain. He saw how much she was distressed, and how painfully she was affected by any reference to these topics, and on that account he desired that no question should be asked him on that subject.

It was a privilege of no ordinary character to be permitted to witness the spirit with which he endured his afflictions, and the composure with which he approached the dark valley and shadow of death. His sun of life was hanging low in the west; the shadows were long, and the air was growing chilly, as the curtains of night were gathering around him. But his step was firm and unwavering, for he had grasped, with the strong hand of faith, the staff of his Conductor, and on this he was steadfastly leaning as he descended the darkening vale.

About four o'clock of this day, a decided change for the worse took place; but he still retained his reason. About eight o'clock in the evening his physicians called, and pronounced him in a dying state -- not actually dying, but in a sinking condition, which would terminate in death.

On entering the room after the physicians left, he asked us what the doctors said, and what directions they had left for the night. He was informed that they had done all they could for him. To which he replied, "I have no doubt of it." He was also told that they had said that a little brandy or wine, taken at short intervals, would prolong his life a few hours. We asked him if he would take it? He said he would rather not. He then remarked, "I do not think I shall die tonight, though I may." Someone present said, "You are not afraid to die?" "No," he replied, "I am not afraid; I am in the hands of God." And after a moment added, with emphasis, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ."

Between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, at his request, all who were sitting up in the adjoining room, went into his chamber to engage in prayer with him. J. D. Coulling led in prayer. He responded "Amen!" at one time loud enough to be heard all through the house. His hands, feet, and head were cold -- his pulse was very bad, scarcely more than a barely perceptible flutter, and yet his mind continued entirely clear. He was not, however, able to converse. He lived through the night, and on the morning of the 9th May, about eight o'clock, he remarked to his wife and sister, who were by his bed, "I cannot die; it seems that the Lord is not willing for me to die now. I am willing to die, and have tried, during the night, to die; but I cannot."

At nine o'clock we were again called into his room for prayer. William H. Star prayed. Mr. Childs seemed engaged, but was not able to respond in his usual way. He continued to grow cold, while his body was covered with clammy sweat. He began to complain of his head, and became a little restless. About ten o'clock he appeared to suffer a good deal, and complained of pain in the back part of his head. His pulse had almost entirely ceased. I said to him, "Brother Childs, you seem to be rational, and to know everything that is passing?" "O yes," he replied, "I know you all." Said I, "Can you not tell us how it is with you?" "If I had strength," he replied, "I could tell you a great deal;" and then remarked, "I had two or three things that I wanted to tell you, but I am too weak to converse now."

He was dying -- he knew it; but he was perfectly resigned. Said I to him, "The struggle is nearly over." "Almost," he replied.

"My dear husband," said his weeping wife, as she bent over him in inconsolable anguish, "you seem to be going to leave us; have you nothing more to say?" His only reply was, "All my hope is in God." Here his strength failed him. He complained of his head, and became quite restless, but betrayed no impatience, nor the least want of unlimited trust in God.

He then seemed suddenly to rouse up, and said in a strong distinct voice -- "Light, more light." His wife said to him "The room is light." His eyes were open, and one present placed himself as nearly as he could before him, so as to bring himself in the range of his vision, and said, "Brother Childs, do you not see me?" "No," said he, "I cannot see you." "But you know me?" "Yes," he replied, "I know you all." His wife, who was on the bed by him, leaned over him, and

again inquired, "Dear husband, do you know me?" He promptly replied in broken accents, "I shall ever know you." These were his last words.

At quarter past twelve o'clock, May 9th, 1850, in the house of Captain William Childs, in the city of Norfolk, Virginia, he instantly ceased to breathe, and in a moment was still in death. A broken-hearted wife sat by his lifeless body, shrieking in despair, while five fatherless children, sent up their piteous cries from another apartment of the house -- most of them too young to appreciate the extent of their loss. The suffering man was released -- his spirit had taken its flight; and while many tears fell over his remains, they were shed more for the living than the dead.

He was decently shrouded, and placed in a plain, substantial mahogany coffin, to which was attached a metallic plate with the inscription, REV. JOHN W. CHILDS, AGE 49.

It is due to the good people of Norfolk, to say, that every attention was paid to Mr. Childs, during the few days that he lived after his arrival in the city, that Christian kindness could prompt. It is especially due to Mr. Levi Westray and his estimable wife, to say, that they spared no pains to contribute to his comfort. By day and by night they were at his bedside, ministering to his wants, and watching the progress of his disease; and after his death they attended, principally, to the preparations necessary for the removal of his remains to Lynchburg. Nor can we speak in too high terms of the untiring attention and generosity of his attending physicians, Doctors Baylor and Tunstall.

The day following his death the coffin was enclosed in another of zinc, and placed in a box of suitable dimensions to admit a surrounding layer of charcoal, and in the care of Mr. Thomas Early, his wife's nephew, was conveyed on the boat which carried the surviving family to the city of Richmond. At the steamboat landing in Richmond, the family and remains were met and received by Rev. H. B. Cowles, Rev. G. W. Carter, Mr. William C. Bell, and others.

The family received every mark of attention which kindness and sympathy could dictate, and were hospitably entertained by Mr. N. Thornton, at the American Hotel, while the body of the deceased was placed in a hearse, and conveyed to the Centenary church, and deposited for the night.

The day following, May 11th, the remains were forwarded by a packet boat on the canal to Lynchburg, and on the Monday following, May 13th, were followed by the family, under the care of Mr. Early.

On Tuesday evening, the 14th, the regular packet, bearing the bereaved family, reached Lynchburg about the time of the arrival of the boat which conveyed the remains. The body was carried to the Methodist church, and deposited for the night; and on the day following, Wednesday, May 15th, the funeral sermon of Mr. Childs was delivered by the Rev. George W. Langhorne, the stationed Methodist minister in Lynchburg, in the presence of a large, and deeply affected audience; after which, the remains, attended by a circle of friends, were deposited in the family burying ground of Rev. John Early, adjacent to the town, to await the resurrection morn.

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## Chapter 20 CONCLUSION

General reflections on his life and character -- Suggestions as to the use that should be made of his life -- Further recollections by Mrs. Early -- Conclusion

We have now followed the subject of this biography to the close of his journey; have witnessed his death, and seen him consigned to the house appointed for all the living. The rest of the grave is sweet to one so wearied with the toils of life. His labors are ended, and his works follow him. Blessed, thrice blessed, are the dead that die in the Lord.

"His languishing head is at rest,  
Its thinking and aching are o'er;  
His quiet immovable breast  
Is heaved by affliction no more."

Mr. Childs was one of the best men we have ever known; and however the reader may differ with him as to his scruples of conscience, in relation to a number of comparatively small matters brought to view in this work, he will, in the main, be constrained to admit that his life furnishes an example of consistency rarely met with in any age of the world.

There are some things that we may not be able to comprehend and appreciate; for example, his conviction that it was his duty to walk and preach, and yet we are compelled to do him the justice to believe that in this he was strictly conscientious.

But dropping these small and unimportant points in his history, where have we seen a life of such untiring devotion to the work of the ministry, of so much humility, of so much benevolence, of so much prayer? As a Christian, where is the example that eclipses his? Who has exhibited more of the mind that was in Jesus? Who that has walked more closely and constantly with God? Whose life has furnished a more striking and instructive comment upon the religion of the Bible? In all the relations of life, he carried out, into practical effect, the teachings of the word of God; so that his life presents a most happy manifestation of all the virtues, and excellencies that constitute the Christian character. There is a symmetry and harmony about it, that we but seldom meet with, even in the lives of eminently good men.

His piety was indeed of a most exalted character. At one or two different periods in his Christian life, he professed to enjoy the blessing of "perfect love" or sanctification, as taught in Wesleyan Methodist Theology. Strange that a man of such extraordinary devotion and faith, did not enjoy it without interruption.

His experience on this subject is somewhat unaccountable. It would seem that in all the latter years of his life, he must have attained to the stature of a man in Christ Jesus; and yet he did not profess to have made this attainment.

But, it must strike everyone, that his professions were far below his actual attainments. So far as we can judge, from all we have seen of the man, he seems to have held uninterrupted communion with God, and to have lived a life of faith in Jesus Christ; so that he might have adopted with perfect propriety, the language of St. Paul: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

He was a good preacher; not endowed with the higher gifts of eloquence and popular oratory, but a scriptural, evangelical, practical minister of the Gospel of Christ.

He never aimed at anything fine or beautiful in the pulpit; on the contrary, he most carefully abstained from anything of the sort. And yet, on some occasions, he has been known to rise to a style and manner of delivery, that were exceedingly captivating and overpowering. But his habitual style was plain, direct, and unadorned; and his manner serious, impressive, and earnest.

Earnestness was eminently characteristic of his manner of preaching. His appeals were pungent, stirring, and effective.

He always confined himself to his subject, and was most happy in illustrating it by scriptural examples, which he gave in the language of the Bible. A more faithful preacher never lived. He dealt honestly with his people; and whether they would hear or forbear, he never failed to declare the whole counsel of God. The word delivered by him was "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." Beneath its well-directed strokes, sinners and inconsistent professors of religion were often made to tremble and quake as if the day of doom had come. At times his sermons were invested with a singular interest, and produced most startling effects.

As a pastor, he was affectionate, sympathetic, and sincere. His conversation was always "seasoned with salt -- fit to minister grace to the hearers." His own spirit was imbued with meekness, and clothed with humility, so that he was an example to the flock. He was exceedingly courteous and polite in all his contacts with his members, and with the people of the world; and at the same time he carried with him an air of devotion, that never failed to strike the most casual observer. All that saw him were constrained to take knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus; and that while he walked on earth, and talked with men, "his conversation was in heaven."

As to his views of Christian charity or benevolence, he, perhaps, carried them, practically, too far. This is a point, however, on which we must express our views with great caution. Mr. Childs, literally, gave away all that he had beyond his present necessary demands. He never laid up a dollar for a future day. As an unmarried man we do not see that this course lies open to any very serious objection. But to our mind it does seem to be the scriptural duty of the man of family, not only to provide suitably for the support and education of his family while living; but also, in the event of his death, should the providence of God place it in his power, to leave something for their maintenance when he shall cease to provide for them. Mr. Childs entertained different sentiments on this subject; and consistently with his principles he gave away all his surplus means; and this he did through life. And in dying he left his widow and children to God.

It is proper however, to remark, that, two weeks preceding his removal to Norfolk, he seemed to be deeply absorbed in his own reflections, when the following conversation took place between himself and Mrs. Childs. As she was waiting at his bedside, he suddenly called her. She turned to look and found him lying, with his eyes closed, and his countenance expressive of the deepest emotion. She drew near and leaned over him, when he asked -- "Do you blame me for the course I have pursued?" Alluding to his course of life in not laying up anything for the future. Upon her promptly replying in the negative, and assuring him, that, should she be called to walk the low vale of poverty, she should never censure him; he instantly added, "I now see no other way. It was, that I might cut off all occasion to turn aside, and to do all the good I could to the poor; but if I thought you censured me, it would be a pang that I know not how I could bear. The Lord knows if I could have acted differently, and saved my soul, most gladly would I have done so; but I believe I could not."

As a husband he was devoted and tender; and perhaps no man ever treated a wife with more profound respect and unaffected politeness than did Mr. Childs.

As a parent he loved his children, and always felt the deepest interest in their welfare, as his correspondence with his eldest daughter shows; yet he rarely ever touched or caressed them. His family discipline was maintained with great decision and firmness.

The following additional recollections of this devout minister of the Gospel, furnished by Mrs. Early, with whom he was more intimate than with any other Christian friend; and who, indeed, knew more of his private walk, in all the relations of life, than anyone else not constantly in his family, cannot fail to be acceptable to the reader, at the close of this volume.

Lynchburg, Va.

My Dear Brother:-- I promised to give you something further in relation to my dear brother, "in the way of impressions and recollections," but feel like one approaching hallowed ground; so incompetent am I to do justice to the subject, and so fearful lest I obscure the brightness of that light which it was my privilege, in part, to behold for the space of seventeen years.

Would that I could transfer to you a faithful delineation of the impressions left upon my mind and heart; but when I make the effort, the most expressive language I can command falls so far short that I am almost ready to despair.

In conversation, a few days ago, with an intelligent and prominent member on the Bedford circuit, he made the following remark:-- "Sister F., I have seen many pious ministers, and had many to lodge under my roof whom I loved and venerated; but when Brother Childs came to see me, I felt that I was entertaining one who was more than mortal. A sacred awe rested upon me, as though I had an angel in my house." This comes nearer my own views and feelings than anything I could say.

I will now give you such reminiscences as I may be able call to mind; but fear the desultory manner will prevent their being of much advantage to you.

Since his marriage with my sister in 1833, I have seen him under every variety of circumstances, and been much with him under his own roof while sojourning in the parsonages on the Bedford, Campbell, and Cumberland circuits, and several months with them in Prince Edward, and unhesitatingly affirm I never saw his like before. He was the same consistent, devout, meek, patient, and holy man in the privacy of his own domicile that he was in the eyes of all who knew him. Nay, more -- for his purity shone with a brighter luster in the midst of domestic trials, of which, in common with others, they had their share. I have often thought it hard to determine which of the graces brightest shone, in such perfection were they all exhibited; but, if any had the pre-eminence, it was his unconquerable patience under all the trials of public and private life. I never saw him waver, or, in the slightest degree, moved from his steadfastness.

You know he lived a life of prayer. When at home, in addition to family prayer night and morning, he prayed with his family at noon; and always, on leaving and returning home, his voice was heard in committing himself and all his, to the keeping of his covenant God. In addition to all this, if friends called to make a visit, or on business, they never left without being called to bow the knee before the great I AM. And yet again, if anything of a peculiarly trying nature occurred, he seemed to fly instinctively to the Strong for strength. And my sister has told me that she has known him suddenly to break off or interrupt conversations of a controversial character, when the parties seemed to be unduly excited, and by his fervent intercessions call off the mind and calm every feeling. But this liberty he never took, save in his own house.

In relation to his social qualities, he seemed to me to be faultless; but so systematic was he in the disposition of his time, and in adhering so unwaveringly to what he regarded duty, that, by many, I am aware, he was thought deficient in this respect. He believed, with Mr. Wesley, that Christians could not be profitably engaged in conversation, at any one time, more than an hour; and he rarely spent so much as that, unless the conversation was so decidedly spiritual as to afford him a field for doing good. And then, hours would pass unheeded by.

In the family circle, (his own as elsewhere,) he was kind, gentle, affable, and especially polite to a degree I have never seen in anyone. While this trait of character was exhibited to all, yet more especially was it observable toward his wife; never receiving the smallest attentions at her hands without an expression of thankfulness.

As a father, while he was truly tender and affectionate, he never caressed his children; and yet few fathers were ever more beloved by their children, and no children more unreserved in the presence of a father. He was quick to observe the buddings of evil, and prompt to apply suitable correction: fully believing that he who spared the rod spoiled the child.

As a friend and brother I can speak more fully; and here I touch a chord which vibrates through all the chambers of my heart. Always the same, under all circumstances. Sympathetic, affectionate, and true as a brother after the flesh, but chiefly to be prized for his unflinching fidelity, in watching with a jealous eye for my spiritual well-being. Many precious proofs are stowed away in memory's treasury, one of which I will give you. On a very cold day, while on a visit to us, he led the class which stately meets in our house. A large number were present. At a late period, when nearly all the seats were occupied, a wealthy member of the class came in, and took one of the few remaining seats near the door. I had a more comfortable seat near the fire, and

fearing lest her feeble health would suffer from exposure to the draft, I several times, during the meeting, invited her to accept it. When the meeting had closed, and we were alone, with the sweet humility which ever beamed from his face, he told me he had observed the special attention I paid to that visitor, while others similarly situated, were unnoticed, and feared I might have been influenced by that "respect of persons" so clearly condemned by the word of God. Such a friend is more precious than silver and gold, and his loss incalculable.

I have good reason to believe this faithful dealing was not confined to those to whom he was thus closely allied. The following instance occurred during his last memorable visit to us. Among other visitors who had called during the morning, was a lady who had an only child, and that a daughter of about ten, upon whose apparel and outward adorning she seemed to have bestowed undue time and labor. This he had noticed a year or two before, but for want of an opportunity had not mentioned it to the mother. When she arose to depart, we were invited to prayer, as was his custom; after which, on taking her hand to say farewell, he told her plainly, but most tenderly, wherein he thought she was in error, and her danger, and why he had not mentioned it sooner. And I presume hundreds, if not thousands, could bear testimony to his faithfulness in administering private reproof and admonition.

In relation to his natural disposition, I learned from him, what I presume is known to but few, that before his conversion, he possessed an exceedingly quick and resentful spirit, which cost him many a painful struggle to subdue. That he was gay and worldly-minded, and indulged in a vein of witticism which made his company to be sought after by the mirthful and pleasure-taking. These proved a fatal snare to him; for, after his conversion, he in some good degree, lost his spirituality and became a mere formalist in religion. Happily for him, he was not permitted long to continue in this state, in which he said, he often felt that if that was the all of comfort which religion could give, it was not worth the struggle it cost him.

His entire renunciation of all needless conformity to the spirit, maxims, and customs of the world, is too well known to need confirmation; but while he held a tight rein over himself in this respect, and freely and faithfully told what were his views on this subject, he was never known, by me, at least, to exhibit, in the smallest degree, a spirit of censoriousness toward those who differed with him. Even in the most unfavorable cases, he seemed to commit such to the tender mercies of our God.

He was very decisive in his views and practice with his children on this subject, and would, with the utmost tenderness, but plainly, give his wife his views in relation to her own course; but never, for the first time, laid a burden on her, by requiring, or even requesting her to follow any course contrary to, or without the approval of her own judgment: he left her free to follow the decisions of her own mind. That, on this subject, his mind remained unchanged, will appear from the fact that as he neared the portals of glory, he again and again assured her, he saw no other way but that of the cross -- "entire renunciation of the world, the flesh and the devil."

The following incident gives practical proof -- trivial, indeed, it would appear to some -- but full of instruction and admonition to all who are seeking for all the mind that was in Christ.



About two years before his death, their eldest daughter, while absent at school, embroidered him a pair of cloth slippers, which, on meeting him, she presented, as a token of her affectionate remembrance. They were received by him, with an appreciation of the feelings which prompted his child, but were laid aside and never used. During his last illness, when his feet could be no longer comfortable in boots or shoes, the slippers were taken out by his wife and offered him. He consented to put them on, as they were all he had. After wearing them several days, he spoke with gratitude of the great relief they gave his swollen and tender feet; but requested her to cover over those parts which were embroidered, quoting at the same time that forcible passage in St. John's first epistle, 2d chapter, and 16th verse:-- "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." They were then worn constantly thereafter, until he reached Norfolk and will be preserved, as a silent monitor to his family and friends.

Yours truly,  
E. B. Early

We have followed the subject of this biography through the whole period of his earthly existence. We have seen his early training -- we have witnessed his conversion to God -- his connection with the church -- his call to the ministry, and have pursued him through twenty-three years of ministerial and pastoral labor, in the midst of the ever-changing scenes of the Methodist itinerant life. We have seen his fidelity -- his conscientiousness -- his incessant toil. We have read the private conflicts of his spiritual life -- we have examined his peculiar views, in the light of his own explanations -- we have seen him die. Are there not many things worthy of our imitation? May we not derive some very important lessons from his life?

The work is concluded with the earnest prayer that the author and his readers may derive great spiritual benefit from the illustrious example of piety, which it has been the object of these pages, in some sort, to reanimate, and send forth before the world, as a silent but impressive teacher of the way of life.

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#### FUNERAL SERMON OF JOHN WESLEY CHILDS By Rev. G. W. Langhorne

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The following discourse was delivered in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Lynchburg, Virginia, the 15th of May, 1850, on the occasion of the death of Rev. John Wesley Childs, by Rev. George W. Langhorne, of the Virginia Conference. It is an admirable sermon; and contains a fine review of the life and labors of the subject of the foregoing biography, and will well repay a careful perusal. It forms an interesting and appropriate Appendix to the life of Mr. Childs; and we feel happy in being permitted to lay it before the readers of this volume. It is proper to say, that the discourse was prepared for the press at the request of the family of the deceased.

\* \* \*

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." -- Acts 20:24

The remarkable phenomena which graced the conviction of Paul; the mighty struggle through which he was called to pass ere he was delivered from his spiritual thralldom; and the alacrity with which he entered upon, and the intrepid manner in which he prosecuted, the onerous duties of his high and solemn calling, all seemed to foreshadow his subsequently bright and glorious career.

After many years of unexampled labor in the kingdom of Messiah, we find him on his way to Jerusalem; and having reached Miletus, he dispatched messengers to Ephesus, and called together the elders of the church, in order that he might instruct them more thoroughly in the things appertaining to their pastoral duties. When they had come unto him, he adverted to the manner in which he had demeaned himself before them -- the fidelity and zeal with which he had discharged his apostolic functions -- and, at the same time, informed them that clouds of impenetrable uncertainty cast their fearful shadows over his future prospects, and precluded any definite opinion as to the final result: "save that the Holy Ghost testifieth ... saying that bonds and afflictions await me." It is but reasonable to suppose that the instincts of nature involuntarily recoiled at the prospect of physical suffering, yet his spirit rose in the majesty of divine sufficiency, and, disdainingly to yield to the promptings of natural timidity, he boldly avowed his purpose to go forward in the strength of all conquering power -- to risk limbs and life itself in the cause of religion, and leave the consequences in the hands of God.

You have been summoned together this afternoon, yet not to receive the parting benedictions and heavenly instructions of the ambassador of the "Prince of peace," nor even to gaze upon the face irradiated with the divine fire that glows within a bosom warmed and inspired with the love of God; but to pay the last sad tribute of respect to an honored, beloved, and deeply-lamented minister of Jesus Christ -- to follow to the lone retreat, and commit to the custody of the insatiate tomb, the mortal remains of the Rev. John W. Childs, who for twenty-three years has been a member of the Virginia Annual Conference.

This solemn event imposes on your speaker a most painful and impressive task -- a duty which derives its poignancy not from any misgivings as to the present beatitude of our brother, but from sacred reminiscences -- from the premature blight that has settled upon the hopes, and the tide of unutterable anguish which rolls its chilling waves over the warm affections of the heart-smitten widow, helpless orphans, and numerous relations. In the exercise of my ministry I have been often called to attend to the grave the hapless victim of the "king of terrors" -- to perform the obsequies [funerals] of the pious dead as well as those whose wayward lives and impenitent deaths threw back no ray of hopes to cheer the heart-riven survivors; but never until this hour has it been my lot to perform this office at the demise of a minister of Christ -- a brother beloved, and co-laborer in the vineyard of our Lord. I will not attempt an apology for my incompetency, or indulge in those repinings which might seem to infringe upon the wisdom, or call in question the goodness of the Master, being fully persuaded, that if ever I have witnessed an instance in which the tear of sorrow

has been wiped away by the sunlight of immortality -- where the loss of the survivors preponderates with "an eternal weight of glory" to the departed, it is in this case; for him "to die was gain."

The text and the occasion combine to invite us to contemplate the ministerial appointment, its toils and cares, and the noble daring and self-denial requisite to a faithful discharge of the functions of the same.

In conducting this examination, I take leave to remind you --

I. That the true minister of the Gospel receives his appointment thereto from the Lord Jesus Christ -- "the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus."

At the promulgation of the Law, and the internal organization of the Jewish confederacy, and the original institution of the Gospel, the Almighty saw fit to hallow and immortalize those stupendous events with such visible manifestations of his Godhead and power as furnished them with the undying evidences of their Divine origin; and as his benevolent designs were to be accomplished through human instrumentalities, he honored his original agents in a manner suited to their peculiar positions, and the exigencies of their calling -- threw around them such clearly marked evidences of supernatural appointment as would challenge the confidence and rebuke the incredulity of all succeeding ages. These, however, were given for a specific object, and designed for a limited period; after which the Gospel was to appeal to its own excellencies, and the ministry to less conspicuous, yet equally satisfactory, indications of Divine appointment.

If an individual or a class of persons should claim to be the legal representatives of these holy and remarkable men, whose call to the apostleship has been indelibly written in preternatural works and plenary inspiration, a discerning public would naturally anticipate and wisely demand the production of those evidences that will make good such high pretensions; and in default of such testimony, no declamations could save them from the just suspicion of impostors -- as being empty vapourers, whose only claim is founded in arrogance!

While there is no reason to expect any supernatural phenomenon to attend the call of a man to the sacred office in our day, still the Scriptures of God, and the uniform belief of all orthodox Christians, justify and require a belief in, and acknowledgment of, a Divine influence in such an appointment. On this subject the word of God expressly declares -- "No man taketh to himself (rightfully) this honor but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;" while the church propounds this heart-searching inquiry -- "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you the office of the ministry in the Church of God?" To which the candidate is required to respond -- "I trust so." Of this appointment to the work of the ministry I take leave to say --

1. It is made irrespective of the wishes, and in direct opposition to the opinions of men. In this instance the "Lord of the harvest" acts arbitrarily. He calls for no counselor with whom he may advise; and admits no fellow to the secret purpose of his will: His infinite wisdom has marked out the great pathway of his mediatorial operations; and his illimitable power, while it condescends to press into its service the frail instruments of earth, reserves to itself the right to do, and the honor of having accomplished his godlike designs, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and

not of us." Hence, he appoints to this work whom he will: it may be an erudite Paul, an eloquent Apollos, or a plain, unlettered, and uninformed Peter; still, let the lot fall on whom it may, it is his own choice, his sovereign act; and he who enters the ministry in any other way is a hireling intruder into the sacred office.

The validity of this appointment is not dependent on human ceremonies, but on the call of the Holy Ghost, and its confirmation by Divine sanction. On this point, the following, from the Rev. H. Bascom, is so pertinent to my purpose and consonant with my own opinion, that I take the liberty of transcribing it for your benefit -- "We are far from thinking, however, that the Divine commission of which we speak, is, in every essential consecutive sense, dependent on human authority. The weighty, heaven-required qualifications for the ministry are not likely to result from a hasty miscellaneous conscription on the one hand, or systematic recruit for the pulpit on the other. Those who have rushed into the pulpit from visionary impulse, or selfish, interested motives, or have been conducted thither by the drill and cant of others, deserve sympathy, it is true, but only as objects of pity. They are like the prophet's 'abomination of desolations,' found in the place where of all others they ought not to be, and their folly is not unaptly illustrated -- for the analogy is prophetic -- by that of Uzziah, who, usurping the rights of the altar, lost his throne; and, entering the house of God an unaccredited priest, went out a perpetual leper."

In seeking the true basis of ministerial vocation, we do not appeal to the fable of prelatical succession, or ecclesiastical reproduction by corporate church arrangement, inconsistently derived, as we conceive, from a union, a marriage of convenience, on the part of the "man of sin" and "mother of abominations," and but too aptly symbolized by the one and the other. We are compelled to reject every theory which does not preserve the ministry from the very doubtful origin, the bastardy involved in such an assumption. Here the matter is presented in a true gospel light -- is placed on the only scriptural basis, the appointment of God most high.

That man who has entered the ministry with that sense of imperious necessity which attends the call of the Holy Ghost, -- who tremblingly adventures on a work he did not seek, yet dares not omit, -- will, in the exercise of his sacred functions, receive those evidences of Divine approval that will confirm his own convictions of duty and he his witness to the church and the world, that he went forth at the bidding and under the smiles of the Master. "Ye," says the apostle, "are our epistle, known and read of all men." The ministry of such an one will not be a mere syncretism, [syncretize v.tr. Philos. & Theol. attempt, esp. inconsistently, to unify or reconcile differing schools of thought.] but a demonstration of the "power of God and the wisdom of God."

While our lamented brother was not indifferent to those prudential regulations which affix the seal of ecclesiastical recognition of a Divine call to the work of the ministry, he, nevertheless, traced his authority to the only correct and sufficient source of ministerial qualifications -- the bidding of the Lord Jesus Christ; and his whole life furnishes us with the assurance that nothing short of the most overwhelming conviction of indispensable duty -- an obligation which involved his present peace and eternal welfare -- could have induced him to engage in the toils and responsibilities of preaching the Gospel. The lips which would a few days since have declared the heaven-inspired motive which moved him to the office of an "ambassador for God" are now placed under the seal of death, and consequently are incapable of responding to any interrogatory which the curious may be inclined to propound on this particular point; yet I will venture the

assertion that he did not "rush into the pulpit from visionary impulse, or selfish, interested motives," nor was he "conducted thither by the drill and cant of others," but deep down in the chambers of his conscience the "still small voice" of the infallible Teacher issued the mandate of Heaven, and with trembling awe, and self-distrusting care, he obeyed the summons.

But his commission has been required by the Master of assemblies -- the weapons of warfare are laid down at the feet of his commander -- for the last battle, the dread contest with death, has been fought and won; and instinctively we turn to the scenes of his conflicts, and the fields he was called to cultivate, in quest of these heaven-attested evidences of his divine warrant; and, on a hasty review, we return with the joyful report that souls, converted through his instrumentality, have already died in the faith, and have "heired the promised thrones" of God's kingdom -- have entered in advance of him the "church of the first-born in heaven;" while many more are enrolled in the "sacramental host," and are wending their course, and fighting their way to the great rendezvous above. Jesus Christ, the "captain of our salvation," honored and crowned his feeble instrumentality,

"Yet all his trophies, all his spoils,  
He hung upon the cross."

I take leave to remind you --

2. That the appointment to the office of the ministry is made at the loss of temporal prosperity and worldly honor. He who enters the ministry as it should be entered, and prosecutes it with that singleness of purpose and assiduity of labor with which it must be followed, in order to meet the high and holy designs of its Author, must give up all other pursuits, and abandon every other and inferior object. A minister should be "a man of one work!" Having buckled on the sacerdotal armor, and entered the wide arena of spiritual contest, he should gaze on the world as spread out before him in all its false alluring charms -- the cross despised, rejected, scorned -- and be able to sing with the poet from the very bottom of his heart

"Jesus, I my cross have taken;  
All to leave, and follow thee:  
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,  
Thou, from hence, my all shalt be."

That it is in strict accordance with the will of God that those who serve at the altars of his church should be separated from secular pursuits, and dead to the honors of the world, is made plain to my mind from these facts that, under the Mosaic economy, God gave to the tribe of Levi no portion in the distribution of the land of promise; "he designed that they should be supported by the tithes, the first-fruits, the offerings that were made in the temple; by their share of the sin-offerings and thanksgiving -- offerings that were sacrificed in the temple, of which certain parts were appropriated to the priests," and the peculiar constitution of the ministerial corps under the Gospel of his Son, of whose appropriate, peculiar, and absorbing duty, the apostle Peter thus speaks -- "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables ... We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:2, 4.) And whosoever (unless providentially incapacitated for active efficient labor, or forced by the penuriousness of the

church) turns aside from these heaven-prescribed duties to amass the pelf [paltry wealth] of earth, to evoke the empty applause of men, or to supervise and control literary institutions, does, in the opinion of your speaker, compromise, to a great extent, that work to which he professed to have been called.

It surely does not savor of vanity, nor will the charge of egotism lie against me, when I assume, for the great body of the ministry, abilities equal to those possessed by their fellow men; nor is it unreasonable to opine that if they had directed the talents which God has given them, to secular employments; they would have secured for themselves and families an honorable share of the temporal independence and fame which have crowned the efforts of the men of this world. Many of them abandoned, for the sake of the Gospel, pursuits which, in the ordinary course of events, would have filled their coffers with gold, and inscribed their names in the temple of fame. But God ordained it otherwise -- selected them for another and a nobler enterprise -- impelled them to a work, which, though despised and spurned by a majority of the world, and too lightly esteemed by the church, shall ultimately receive a reward commensurate with its true merits; for, "when infidelity lies buried in the grave of years, epitaphed in characters of execration by the millions disabused of its sorceries, the ministry shall receive the homage of ages, and share the admiration of a virtuous universe." But, for the ministry to share the reverence of the present, and extort the homage of succeeding generations, it must be kept separated from the mammon mania which has infected the world, and free from those aspirations after the "honor that cometh of men" -- that love of praise, to gratify which morality, humanity, and religion, have been so frequently and shamefully sacrificed. And, indeed, if the duties of the sacred office are faithfully and conscientiously discharged, there will be neither time nor inclination to pursue any other object. Happy is that man who can say in truth -- "Lo," I "have forsaken all, and followed thee."

While I am not in possession of any information as to what avocation our departed brother had selected anterior to his entering the ministry, or what smiling, cheering prospects of wealth and honor loomed up before him, and cast their radiance on the distance; still I may venture the opinion, that had he applied himself to any ordinary business with the same assiduity and perseverance which characterized his course as a preacher of the Gospel, plenty would have crowned his board, and competency have descended to his family. But he forsook all, and became emphatically "a man of one work." All the energies of mind and body were laid under contribution to advance the glory of God and the good of the church: aye, his heart, mind, life, substance, were laid upon the altar of his Maker; and as holy fire, the fire of love, consecrates the offering, it bound him a willing and adoring captive to the interests of Christianity. No mental reservation -- no probable prosperous or popular contingency marred the sacrifice, or held in dubious equiponderance his future operations; his purpose was settled, his consecration entire; and his course was onward, and as unwavering as the needle to the north pole. He could, and no doubt did, invariably sing with the poet:

"And while thou shalt smile upon me,  
God of wisdom, love, and might,  
Foes may hate, and friends disown me;  
Show thy face, and all is bright."

The conduct of the deceased, as it regarded his temporal affairs, seemed to those most intimately connected with him by the ties of consanguinity, to savor of an indifference incompatible with his relations as husband and father; and ever and anon feelings of disapprobation struggled in their bosoms; and, it appears from a touching incident that occurred during his last illness, that he was not ignorant of those views. In a conversation with the companion of his bosom, touching this matter, he asked, with tears in his eyes, if she censured his conduct; alleging that if she did, it would be the bitterest drop in his cup of affliction. Being assured that she did not, he replied "I did it, my dear, to cut off all occasion to turn aside, and to give all I could to the poor." Whatever may be thought of the correctness of his opinions, and the propriety of his conduct in this matter -- and there will be differences of opinion -- still the high and holy motive which influenced him must be admitted, and should command our admiration. He felt that God had called him to preach the Gospel -- made it his business to do all the good in his power; he knew that the flesh was weak, that ministers are not angels, but men; that the means of temporal comfort and independence might give additional force to the complainings of nature against the toils and privations of the life of an itinerant; and by possibility ultimately lead him to the land of location; therefore, to "cut off all occasion to turn aside" -- to deprive the enemy of his soul of this weapon, and the flesh of this vain prop, he gave away every thing that was not absolutely necessary for the wants of his family. His views may have been, and I incline to the opinion, were erroneous, but the motive was right, and characteristic of the man-like John W. Childs, whose fervor of soul in communing with his Maker kept him in such a state of spiritual absorption, as enabled him to be continually feeling --

"Nothing I ask or want beside,  
Of all in earth or heaven,  
But let me feel thy blood applied,  
And live and die forgiven."

I take leave to remind you --

3. That this appointment is often attended with great personal sacrifice. When the Gospel was first promulgated, its adoption was understood to involve, or put in jeopardy, almost every temporal interest; to subject him who embraced it, to the loss of everything save the happiness it imparted, the hope it inspired. But, as Christianity has advanced, as its glorious and benign influences have spread over the world, the nations have been constrained to do her reverence; and, consequently, the bitterness of opposition, and the virulence of persecution through which she formerly made her way, have disappeared, and now we may all worship God according to the dictates of our consciences, "none daring to make us afraid." With ascriptions of unutterable praise to our heavenly Father, be it said, that the raptures of pardoning love are no longer overcast with the shadows of prisons, tortures, and death; nor is a conscientious profession of religion attended with forebodings of the confiscation of goods, or forcible expatriation from family, home, and country; nay, for every house may be a domestic temple into which the foot of violence dare not enter.

But, while this is true of Christians in general, and likewise of those ministers whose ecclesiastical economy is of a local character, it may still be affirmed of itinerant ministers, that they are required to forsake all, to forego the smiles and company of their parents, to behold, it may be, the tears, to mark the mental agonies, and hear the lamentations of widowed mothers; to

give up the gushing sympathies and the warm solacements, the cheerful conversation and dear association of sisters and brothers, and the comforts and employments of home; and go, they know not where, it may be to the "city full, or desert waste," to the salubrious atmosphere of the mountain ranges, or the far off low-lands, whose swamps and streams emit the health-destroying if not life-consuming miasma. Aye, they must enter the house where wealth spreads its profusion around, and the cot where gaunt poverty is impersonated in every object that meets the eye. Such is the life of an itinerant.

It is often said, and in its practical application to some of the ministerial corps, said correctly, that so far from making sacrifices, their conditions are greatly improved by entering the ministry; that they had but little, if anything to forsake, and everything to gain. In like manner, infidels are wont to ridicule the idea of the apostles sacrificing anything, when all they had to leave was their fishing nets. This may be true, and yet they forsook their all, gave up that which had been, and was still capable of procuring them a competency. Even so may it be said of the most ordinary and obscure among the ministry; for the poorest and most inconsiderable have their endearments, associations, enjoyments, and hopes; and does not every bosom swell with a bounding response to the poet's assertion,

"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

Now, all these must be forsaken, -- sacrificed for the sake of the Gospel.

While, as has been admitted, some ministers are the gainers by their office, -- that they form associations, and reach a prominence to which they had remained strangers but for the ministry; still, there are many others whose family connections will compare with any in the land; and whose rearing, in consequence thereof, was such as to give them access to any society they might choose to enjoy, and whose talents would have raised them to eminence in any department in life. Hence, however high they may raise in the estimation of the church, though their lots may always be cast with the choicest of the spiritual flock, still they lead a life of sacrifice, and must continue to do so, as long as they remain in the itinerant field.

He whose demise we are now lamenting, realized his share of the "lights and shadows" which make up the eventful life of an itinerant. Home, and its cherished reminiscences; kindred, and the endeared associations of youth; and the world, with its hopes and prospects, were all abandoned, truly and unreservedly resigned. In the course of his pilgrimage he passed through the regular gradation from the novitiate to the position of presiding elder, which office he filled for several years. When you are informed that more than twenty-three years of his life were employed in this work, and all the time, except while presiding elder, was spent on circuits, you may readily conclude that he was no novice in the toils, privations, sorrows, and joys of the ministry -- he tasted them all.

With these views on the appointment to the sacred office, and the sacrifices and duties of the same, I will proceed to state --

II. That having received this office from the Lord Jesus, the pervading desire and absorbing concern of the true minister, is faithfully to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. "So I may finish



my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

The concern expressed by the apostle Paul, and which, to some degree, glows within the bosom of every true minister of Jesus Christ, is not a fitful emotion, the mere effervescence of a moment, but a deep-rooted, abiding principle; and one that gains strength and intensity in proportion with the growth of grace in the heart. It is a rekindling of that flame spoken of by the prophet, "the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up;" a type of the heaven-inspired feeling of Paul, who declared, "I could wish myself accused from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." The self-called and humanly-authorized preachers, those men who convert the pulpit into a theater "on which to display, not the sanctity of a Jewish prophet, or the purity of a Christian apostle, but merely to excite the eager, it may be idiot, gaze of an undiscerning crowd, the vendings, perhaps, of sectarian bile, or the still more sickly pulings [sic] of some pampered favorite or starvling [sic] sycophant," [flatterer] are of course, and from necessity, strangers to the concern of what the text speaks. Not having entered the outer court of Christianity, they cannot understand the sublimer mysteries of grace, much less the deep things unfolded in the ministerial office; for let it be remembered, that "he only is a real minister of Jesus Christ, who, in the character of his ministry, consults alike the weal of man, the welfare of ages, and the glory of God, and is solely and burningly occupied with the one pure, intense interest."

That man who is influenced by a concern akin to that felt by the apostle, will be continually looking --

1. To his personal piety and ministerial fidelity. -- No man can be a minister of Christ who is not a child of God by spiritual regeneration -- made such, not by imposing ceremonials, but by "repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." We had as well maintain that a foreigner or an outlaw can be an ambassador from our government to a foreign court, as to suppose that an unconverted individual can be a Gospel minister. The thing is as clearly contradictory as it is positively absurd. As, therefore, personal piety is an indispensable prerequisite to ministerial appointment -- a qualification without which all things else are unavailing -- even so is it essentially necessary to maintain this state of grace in order to fulfill the duties of the office. That a decent exterior, an outward conformity to conventional regulations, and an avoiding of gross immorality, may exist and be maintained in the absence of personal piety, will be admitted; but such a ministry will be a mere cipher -- a drudgery as unproductive of good to the church and the world, as venal [corrupting] to the individual himself. If I have not entirely misapprehended the meaning of the Master, these views are fully sustained by him in the following memorable passage. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt had lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of man." (Matt. 5:13.) Some, whose interest may be advanced by the evasion, may attempt to destroy the force of this passage by saying, "The salt used in this country is a chemical compound -- muriate of soda -- and if the saltiness were lost, or it was to lose its savor, there would be nothing remaining." True, such is the fact, but the salt used in eastern countries was "impure, mingled with vegetable and earthy substances; so that it might lose the whole of its saltiness, and a considerable quantity of earthy matter remain. This was good for nothing, except that it was used, as it is said, to place in paths or walks, as we use gravel. This kind of salt is common still in that country." If, therefore, there be

any point in the simile, it is to be found, not only in the uselessness of an empty profession of religion, but specially in the worthlessness of an ungodly ministry.

This truth cannot be too deeply impressed upon the hearts of the ambassador of Christ, or too jealously guarded by the Church of God, since the archives of time are burdened with the sad memorials of a Christless ministry -- tell to all succeeding generations tales which, on the score of unholy ambition, moral degeneracy, and heartless barbarity, stand unsurpassed; if; indeed, they have ever been equaled in the history of time. All of which ambition, moral corruption, and fiendish cruelty, may be traced to a departure from, and destitution of, the principles of the Gospel, and personal heartfelt piety!

No one quality in the character of our brother was more prominent and remarkable than his deep personal and uniform piety. For this he was distinguished among his co-laborers, and revered by all who knew him. In point of intellectual strength, literary attainments, and pulpit efficiency, he was not regarded as pre-eminent; but for religious experience, entire devotion to God, rapt communion with the "Father of spirits," he was surpassed by none and equaled by but few. Whoever associated with, or came in the presence of, John W. Childs, whether in the social circle, the assembled congregation, or the Conference room, was impressed with an idea that the very atmosphere which surrounded him was impregnated with a spiritual unction -- that God's accredited and honored representative was there. If I may be allowed the use of such an expression, I will say, that his devotional spirit partook of such an ethereal cast as rendered it almost unique. So firmly had he bound his heart to the throne of God, so passionately embraced within the arms of his warmest affections the superlative excellences of the adorable Redeemer, that he seemed to live above the world and its evanescent concerns. If the truth could be ascertained, I think it would appear, that at least one-third of his waking hours were spent upon his knees before God. Nor were his devotions the mere offerings of the lips -- a formal, soulless invocation of promised good, such as characterizes the approaches of the formalist; but they were the profound breathings -- the intense flowing out of the heart; the wrestling of a spirit penetrated with an excruciating desire after entire conformity to the Divine will; a contest, in which the strongest energies of the soul were engaged -- a soul animated by a living faith: which, resting its claims on the atonement of the Lamb, and undergirded with the immutable truth of the covenant-keeping God, seemed to breathe forth the high resolve --

"Wrestling, I will not let thee go,  
Till I thy name, thy nature know."

He loved to pray! Prayer was the choicest employment of his heaven-aspiring spirit -- his light, his life, his bliss. Through this consecrated channel he was wont to draw nigh to God, to penetrate the ranks that encircle with their blaze the throne, to catch the inspiration which awes, exhilarates, and entrances the "first-born sons of God," and "obtain grace to help in every time of need." Whoever looked upon him while in audience with the Deity, can never eradicate from his mind the hallowed impressions of that hour. Nay, memory will ever and anon recur to the scene, and call up the rapt abstraction of the spiritual wrestler. Hence the secret of his deep piety and ministerial fidelity -- he "walked with God," and was sustained by the Divine afflatus.

Whenever the desire spoken of in the text, and which is felt by every Gospel minister, is kept alive by that experimental enjoyment of God, which is the birthright of every child of heaven, it will lead the minister of Christ to look --

2. To the honor and exaltation of the sacred ministry. It is a divine and holy calling; and, in point of the honor, dignity, responsibility, and usefulness, has no equal in the world. To be an ambassador for God; an agent whose duty is to negotiate a peace between heaven and earth; to transact business which connects time and eternity, to be the instrument in forming a moral caste that must give an eternal locality to the occupants of time, is an office at once the most exalted and onerous [weighty], and which extorted from an inspired Paul the inquiry, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Notwithstanding the impropriety and injustice of estimating the intrinsic excellences of religion by the external deportment of its professors; still the major part of mankind do and will continue to judge of its qualities by its living exponents. While the truth of this remark will apply to professors in general, it is essentially applicable to the ministers of the word. They are expected to be the lively exemplars of that heavenly-devised system which brings "glory to God in the highest," and diffuses "peace on earth and good-will to men." Hence, if they fall below the standard of moral purity excited by the Gospel, and called for by enlightened public opinion, religion suffers, and the ministerial office is disparaged, if; indeed, it is not contemned. To a want of personal religion, a proper perception of, and concern for, the dignity of the ministerial office, and a becoming zeal for the honor and exaltation of the same, is to be traced the horror with which it was regarded in the days of the inquisition, and the utter contempt into which it had sunk in the times of Charles the Second. (Macaulay's History of England, Vol. I., pp. 305-6-7.) While the minister of the Gospel should never seek in a vitiated [invalid] public opinion the standard of his faith and the rule of his conduct, he is, nevertheless, so to demean himself as to acquire a "good report from them that are without." A stranger alike to that sycophantic suppleness of spirit that caters to public applause, and that stupid indifference to enlightened moral opinion, which some have evinced, it should be his study and delight so to "magnify his office" that "the ministry be not blamed:" yea, he is to live in such strict conformity to the revealed will of Jehovah as to "commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

While the messenger of the Most High should guard, with uncompromising vigilance, the dignity and honor of his office by throwing around it a sanctity of moral purity, and call to his aid a zeal commensurate with its high and holy destiny, he should be equally careful to separate from it that unnatural and superstitious reverence with which impostors and "clerical coxcombs" [coxcomb n. an ostentatiously conceited man; a dandy.] have striven to invest it. Such intruders into the ministry have presumptuously and blasphemously set themselves "up as a single caste of mediators between God and man;" and for their own elevation and venal purposes have assayed to transmute the simple ordinances of the church into infallible channels of grace and salvation, and "bartered, in exchange for works, and penances, and gold, the salvation freely given by God." A course of conduct so plainly antagonistic to Scripture warrant, has given just occasion for the sneers and reproaches which have been so lavishly bestowed upon the ministerial office by the carping enemies of the Gospel. The true minister of Christ will address himself to the work of saving his office from the blur of an ungodly life, on the one hand, and an impious elevation and

sickening exclusiveness and monopoly on the other: his soul will respond to the poet's description of what a pastor should possess --

A father's tenderness; a shepherd's care;  
A leader's courage, which the cross can bear;  
A ruler's awe; a watchman's wakeful eye;  
A pilot's skill -- the helm in storms to ply  
A fisher's patience, and a laborer's toil;  
A guide's dexterity to disembroil;  
A prophet's inspiration from above;  
A teacher's knowledge, and a Saviour's love."

The earliest and most cherished recollections of our departed Brother Childs are associated with the ministerial office. His honored father was a devoted preacher of the Gospel; and, after spending twenty years of his life as an itinerant in the Baltimore Conference, fell, like his lamented son, on the field of battle, with his armor on. Being thus early brought into intimate connection with God-fearing and holy ministers, and growing up under the influence which such an association produced on piously-disposed minds, it is not surprising that when called to that office himself he entertained the most exalted conceptions of its dignity, and devoted his subsequent life to the exaltation of the same. Believing most firmly in the Divine inspiration of the Bible -- that it is God's own book, a "transcript of the Divine mind," a record of truth and a sacred directory, he applied himself to the study of its pages, with the purpose of conforming his life to the requirements of the same. It was from this source of heavenly illumination that he derived his portraiture of a Gospel minister -- learned what he was to be in himself; and to the church and the world. Here he ascertained that in his personal character the minister must be "blameless" in life and conversation; "vigilant;" maintain a watchful care over himself and the church of God; be "sober," serious, and grave; to avoid, on the one hand, lightness and frivolity, and, on the other, gloomy moroseness; he must be "hospitable" in his feelings and social contacts, avoiding every approach to that habit of mind which is "greedy of filthy lucre," and leads to "a love of money, the root of all evil;" that he is to be no "brawler," because a wrangling, noisy disposition is incompatible with the meekness and patience necessary to the "man of God;" "ruling well his own house, having his children in subjection," and thereby avoid the damnable doctrine of priestly celibacy -- "forbidding to marry," as set forth and maintained by anti-Christian Rome; and that indifference to, and neglect of; parental authority and discipline which brought shame and reproach on Eli and ruin on his sons; and, in order to meet the requirements of God and the wants of the church, he should not "entangle himself with the affairs of this life," by entering into any secular employment, whereby his mind may be harassed and his labors divided.

But, the duties of the ministry are not circumscribed by his own or his family's interests, for they are also of a relative character; and hence he learned that he should "study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God" -- be "apt to teach." Having thus drawn from the treasury of infallible knowledge and instruction the standard of ministerial character, he addressed himself to the task of filling up the outline; and I appeal to his brethren in the ministry and laity to testify to the fidelity with which he accomplished the work. We may examine his life from the commencement of his ministry to its close, and assert, without hesitation, that in him "the ministry" was not justly "blamed."

Perhaps I may be allowed, at this point, to allude to his private habits. Brother Childs loved retirement. The closet or the silent grove were sacred retreats to him; for there he could abstract his mind from the world, commune with Jehovah, and study his holy word. This love of seclusion called him away from that social mingling with his people which is generally expected and desired, and which, if properly regulated, is productive of good, both to the minister and his flock; and, in consequence of his habits of retirement, he was thought by many to be too much of an ascetic. [ascetic n. a person who practices severe self-discipline and abstains from all forms of pleasure, esp. for religious or spiritual reasons. -- Oxford Dict.] But, when we learn that the ordinary conversations of the world had no charms for him; that they neither imparted light to his mind or food to his heart; that to have partaken of them would have quenched the fire of his devotion and diverted him from the great object of his life -- entire consecration to God, we may find in his conscientious scruples an apology for his apparently unsociable manner of life; and especially when we remember that he invariably left behind him the savor of a good name -- an impression that a man of God and a minister of the Gospel of peace had been there! And surely this was worth more than all the empty and not infrequently ambiguous encomiums on the social and convivial qualities of some who bear the name of ministers. The lamented Childs honored the calling, and strove to exalt the office of the ministry.

The motive of which I have been speaking influences the soul of the faithful minister,

3. With an intense concern for the success of the Gospel. The man who entertains correct views of the Christian revelation, knows that it "was not intended merely or mainly to gratify the intellectual curiosity and enrich the mind of man, but so to change his nature and reverse his moral condition, as to establish him in the final virtue and happiness of heaven. Nor is there any lack of evidence to demonstrate to his mind the moral efficiency of the Gospel to effect these legitimate designs of the Christian dispensation. Nay, for "it has humbled the power and pretensions of every other worship to the dust -- even the most lofty and imposing, sustained by the lore of Greece and the empire of Rome." While the power and success of the Gospel, which have been imperishably epitaphed on the demolished fanes [temples], fallen altars, mute oracles, and disbanded priesthood of antagonistic systems, are to continue a portion of the world's eventful history, and the safeguard and hope of all succeeding generations, still the grand designs of the Gospel will not be accomplished without the most uncompromising fidelity, indomitable courage, and unwearied efforts of those on whom God has condescended to place the honor of being under-helpers and subordinate agents in the work of human salvation.

To the eye of the Christian philanthropist, and especially to the divinely-appointed minister; the world is tabled out as a vast graveyard, within whose walls are imprisoned millions upon millions of immortal beings of all ages and classes, who are infected with one common and fatal epidemic, and tending with the rapidity of time to the grave; while just beyond the yawning tomb glares the fiery caldron of judicial wrath -- the "lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." While gazing on a scene so tremendously awful -- a scene the reality of which can scarcely be penetrated by the most vivid imagination -- and which bids defiance to language to describe its shadow, the heart is deeply penetrated, and the spirit, imbued with that love that brought the Son of God to earth, burns with heavenly zeal to make known "the Gospel of the grace of God."

That the Gospel is in deed and in truth "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," that unless this be believed and embraced the bitterness of endless death will be the doom of every sentient [mentally perceptive, and thus accountable] being, are facts which impress themselves upon the mind with a force that is irresistible. And to be lost! -- to "linger in eternal pain and death for ever and aye" -- to be "banished from the presence of God and the glory of his power" -- to depart accursed, with devils, "full powerful to reason, and full mighty to suffer!" Who can bear the thought -- look upon such a prospect, and not feel the very deep of his heart heave with unutterable desire to open the prison door, and let the captives go free!

The inefficiency of all other expedients to reach and remedy the dire necessity is legibly imprinted on the ever-augmenting guilt and accumulating wretchedness of our race. The impotency of unaided reason to devise means for the relief of mankind, and the glorious adaptation of the Gospel to the necessities of the world, and its sufficiency to recover the lost, are clearly set forth in this memorable statement of facts made by Origen, who says -- "I know of but one Phaedo and one Polemon throughout all Greece, who ever were made better by their philosophy, whereas Christianity hath brought back its myriads from evil to virtue." Seeing, therefore, that the Gospel is the great moral panacea, whose curative qualities can remove the fearful epidemic under which our race are pining and dying, the true minister of Christ fervently desires, and patiently labors to disseminate it throughout the world.

No one acquainted with the deceased, will question his interest in the matter. The facts which have already been given touching the sacrifice he made for the sake of the Gospel are sufficient to attest the truth that "the love of Christ constrained" him; and if any other evidence were needed, I might appeal with confidence to his wrestling spirit, his zeal in preaching the word, and the fidelity with which he warned, entreated, and prayed "men to be reconciled to God." Could I render vocal the toneless rooms, groves, and pulpits, where for more than twenty years, this man of God prayed, wept, and preached, they would declare that, next to his own salvation, he longed and labored for the success of the Gospel in saving souls. He lived, prayed, and toiled, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he "received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Nor did he strive in vain. The grace he implored was given; his desire to witness the success of his mission was to a good degree, granted him, and the goal has been triumphantly reached. Earth has lost a faithful ambassador; the church a burning light; his family -- name them not! 'twere vain to attempt a description of their deep sorrow and irreparable loss: but heaven has received and crowned a devoted subject -- he has "entered into the joy of his Lord."

"Servant of God, well done!  
Rest from thy loved employ;  
The battle fought, the vict'ry won,  
Enter thy Master's joy."

III. That, while in the conscientious discharge of the duties appertaining to his office, the true minister is not diverted from his course by the frowns or smiles of the world, the toils and privations of his work, and the dangers which attend upon his calling. "None of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear unto me."

It must not be supposed that the high resolve uttered by the apostle in the words just quoted, is, in our day, a mere ideality -- the dream of some romantic enthusiast; for, while it is admitted that open opposition to the Gospel, and violence to its advocates, have, to a good degree, passed away, still they have numerous and powerful enemies to encounter, and untold difficulties to overcome. The scepter of moral revolt that once waved in proud defiance over a besotted world, though pierced and torn, is still waving; and the armies of the "prince of the power of the air," though discomfited, thinned, and broken, are, nevertheless, still in arms against the "King of Zion," and ready to be employed when, where, and in whatever way their wily chief may desire. With these facts in view, the minister of Christ knows --

1. That the world despises and contemns his office, while the church itself places too low an estimate on the sacred calling. Always watchful over the welfare of his disciples, and vigilant in imparting unto them all the instructions which they were capable of receiving, that they might be "furnished unto every good work;" and also be forewarned of the dangers which they would necessarily encounter, we hear the Master admonish the apostles as follows:-- "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John 15:18, 19) Thus warned, they are sent forth to brave the hatred and persecution of the world, and the undying malignity of the devil.

The nature of man is the same in all ages; for he is "shapen in sin and conceived in iniquity." The seeming amity of the world toward the Gospel and its advocates is not to be attributed to any radical change in the nature of man, but to the prevalence and power of religion, and the influences of education and the pulpit. While, therefore, that deep and bitter hostility formerly evinced toward Jesus Christ and his kingdom has been succeeded by a more pacific exterior, we must not forget that now, as formerly, "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Its very constitution has been totally perverted, and is, in consequence thereof the very opposite of what it should be, and what religion professes to make it. This inapposite state of the human heart to the service and love of God is the real secret of its hatred to the Gospel and its messengers, and hence the minister should not be surprised when the world hates him. Indeed, he should esteem it an evidence of piety if he be hated by the wicked; for it is often the case that "most decided evidence is given that a man is the friend of God, by the opposition excited against him by the profane, the Sabbath-breaker, and the desperate." When, therefore, the servant of God encounters the dislike and persecution of wicked men, he should not think strange of it, since it was expressly stipulated for in the divine warrant -- "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely for my sake.

"Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. 5:11, 12.)

It would be gratifying to the feelings of your speaker to dismiss this feature of his subject with the foregoing reflections on a state of things clearly revealed by God, and anticipated by every enlightened minister, without adverting to another and far more painful and humiliating topic; but this may not be done, and however painful the task, still justice to the subject in hand demands

an allusion to the fact, that the church itself places too low an estimate on the office and services of its ministers.

That there are many in the church who entertain proper affection for, and evince a becoming Christian sympathy in ministers and their families, I most readily, and with unfeigned pleasure, admit; but that a large majority of church members are sadly at fault in these things, is most clearly and shamefully inscribed on the meager provision made for their support; the failure to meet the penurious allowance; and the want of sympathy for, and interest in, themselves and families, which it is their right to expect, and a burning shame and crying sin in the church to withhold.

The economy of other churches places it within the power of their ministers to provide against those contingencies which so often mar the happiness and augment the sufferings of itinerants. They select their own fields of labor, stipulate for a sufficient and certain support, and, consequently, are not subject to the apathy and penuriousness of an indifferent officary, who, if they take any steps towards providing for the minister, make every step with the most rigid adherence to the least possible expense. Not so, however, with our ministers. They have no choice in the matter; but having dedicated themselves to a system of ministerial operation that seeks the good of the whole church, they must go where the Episcopacy directs, whether it be to plenty and comfort, or to want and suffering. Such being the nature of our economy, the ministers and their families are deserving of, and should receive, the gushing sympathies of the entire membership, and a comfortable independent support from the church. But do they realize them? Let every district, circuit, station and member answer this interrogatory.

That our lamented Childs had his share of these sad ingredients in an itinerant's life is but reasonable to suppose. Such deep piety, close, faithful preaching, and pointed denunciations of sin as characterized his life and ministry, could not but excite the disrelish, and draw down upon him the contumely and persecution of the slaves of sin. Yet he murmured not, but patiently endured all for the sake of Christ and his cause.

Nor was he a stranger to that criminal indifference which is sometimes evinced by certain portions of the church. This, however, was not the case with all. Nay, it is true of but few of the many appointments he was called to fill. To the most of them he and his faithful, but now, alas! heart-smitten consort, turned with delight, and warmed their pilgrim hearts with the cherished recollections of reciprocal affection -- with the reminiscences of other days, and never-to-be-forgotten friends.

I take leave to remark --

2. That the minister of Christ receives his office as one of toil and care. -- If we were to form an opinion of the ministerial office as it is seen in national establishments, we might conclude that it is a post of ease, honor, and emolument; but when we turn from such an unscriptural and unnatural connection and perversion, and draw our type of a Gospel ministry from the word of God, we learn that it is a work in which the heart, mind, and physical energies are all laid under contribution, and often taxed to their utmost tension. To be a "watchman on the walls of Zion," charged with the solemn duty of warning men of their danger -- of convincing them of sin,



righteousness, and judgment -- of keeping them constantly apprised of the number, adroitness, malignity, and power of their foes -- to feel the responsibility and danger of his position, as portrayed by the poet --

"The myriad foe, in close array -- come on to try their might,  
A night assault- -- and if thy tramp mistake a single sound,  
I'll hang upon these battlements the watchman on his round."

Many will prompt the exclamation -- "Great God! who, uncalled, unbidden, would be sent a watchman!"

But this office implies more, for the minister is constituted a "Shepherd and Overseer," and has committed to him the task of "feeding the flock and taking the oversight thereof." To discharge the multifarious duties of such an office is to keep constantly employed all the energies of body and mind -- to labor night and day for the good of souls.

We must look for our brother's views of the laborious duties of the ministry, as they were exhibited in his life. He was no laggard in the vineyard of our Lord: no "hireling" in the Church of God. In preaching the word, he was "instant in season, out of season." Personal ease and worldly comfort formed no part of the plan of his operations. "Onward!" was his watchword; and in sunshine or in rain, in the heat of summer, or the piercing cold of winter, in health and debility, by night and by day, he was found on the watchtower of Zion: and his "trump mistook not a single sound," but, truth, fidelity, and perseverance characterized his "rounds on the battlements" from 1827, when he became a "watchman," until 1850, when he was called to quit his post of trust, and take his position among those bright exemplars of Christian purity and elevation who, after imprinting the halo of their examples upon the scene of the contest, stand in the presence, and attend upon the person of the "Captain of their salvation." In that bright and honored company, John Wesley Childs is now enrolled.

I take leave to say --

3. That the work of the ministry is one of danger. -- When I allude to the dangers that attend the preaching of the Gospel, it must not be imagined that I wish to class them with those encountered by the early ambassadors of God. They lived in remarkable times -- were called to a work peculiar in itself and unique to the world, and in consequence thereof, were doomed to extraordinary trials and constant exposure. These times, however, have passed, and the events which rendered them unusual have also disappeared. While these things will be admitted, still we are not to conclude that the work of the ministry is without danger; true, these grow out of natural causes, still they are real, and in some instance formidable. Hence Dr. Clarke remarks that he who attends faithfully to the works of the Master "must sooner or later fall a martyr to his work." That many have thus fallen is a matter of history, and that many more will do so is almost certain.

As has been stated, the itinerant system adopted and carried out by our church, subjects our ministers to every variety of climate and mode of living; and these changes have their influence on their constitutions and health. The man who this year inhales the salubrious bracing air of our mountain country, may, the very next, encounter the miasma generated and exhaled by the swamps

and bogs of lower Virginia and North Carolina; while he who today reposes on the downy bed and shares the luxuries of the rich, may tomorrow sleep in the log cabin, and share the not less hospitable yet entirely different fare of the poor. In addition to these, the constant exposure to all kinds of weather, and at all seasons of the year, contributes its influence to bring on premature age and infirmity, or, indeed, death itself. Yet he who is impelled onward in his high calling, by the love of Christ and the souls of men, is not diverted from his course by these difficulties, be they many or few; aye, were they a hundred times more, still the language of his heart would be -- "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy: the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Far above the clouds that hang over the pathway of life, looms up "the day-star of glory," whose enchanting brilliancy so captivates his spirit, as to render him, in some good degree, indifferent to his toils and sufferings -- makes him exclaim with the apostle -- "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

I need not inform you that our deceased brother experienced his share of the dangers above alluded to, and realized their effects upon his constitution and health. But it was what he expected when he entered upon his work. The school in which he had been trained was a practical commentary on the vicissitudes of itineracy; and consequently he was prepared to expect not only incessant toil, but constant exposure to disease and death. Yet he was not "moved" because dangers, ever and anon, cast their shadows over his prospects; and that he did not "count his life dear unto himself" is demonstrated by the fact that from A. D. 1827 to 1850 he was entirely engaged in preaching the Gospel.

The last appointment he received was the Gloucester circuit. Several circumstances conspired to render that appointment peculiarly trying to our brother; and these, when rightly considered, will serve to exhibit the strength of his purpose and the self-sacrificing spirit with which he prosecuted his arduous duties. It is a low circuit, and by many considered unhealthy; he had never traveled in the low-country since his marriage; and as his family had suffered much the past year on Brunswick circuit, he had cause to fear that the change would be prejudicial to their health. Alluding to this subject in his letter to his sister-in-law, he said: "I know not whether our appointment will be a profitable one or not. I trust I had no hand in it, therefore I feel the more resigned to Divine Providence." There was no parsonage on the circuit, and that to a man with a wife and six children was no small difficulty, especially when it is known how indifferent many of our churches are in renting parsonages for our ministers. That his mind was troubled on this point will appear from the same letter, where he remarks: "There is no parsonage on the circuit, and I cannot tell what difficulties may be in our way, but we trust the Lord will provide, and that all things will work together for our good;" and, before starting to his circuit, after a season of unusual wrestling with God, he said to his wife that he was impressed with the belief that he should not live long. Hence, it is more than likely, in starting for his field of labor, he felt as if he was going to his grave. This impression may have called forth the finest desire in his letter -- "I long for holiness, for purity; it is this that I pant after more than for gold or silver, or the cattle on a thousand hills ... Oh, had we the spirit of Charles Wesley when he sang

'Welcome alike the cross or crown.'

In nearing the heavenly world he made frequent and careful observations; and whenever the report was demanded, it was always apparent that his bearings had been correct. In consequence thereof, his destination was certain -- the haven of repose, illumined with the radiance of immortality, was just before him, while celestial spirits whispered him away.

He was an affectionate husband and father, and those dear ties entwined themselves about his heart with a strength and firmness that were exceedingly difficult to break and unloose; still the sacrifice was demanded, and grace ultimately triumphed over the promptings of nature. To his wife -- the faithful sharer of his weal and woe -- he addressed words of comfort and encouragement -- "Trust in God," said he, "and he will take care of you and our children." In vain did this cold, selfish, grinding world array itself against his reliance in God's faithfulness, for with unwavering faith he declared -- "I have entire confidence in God, who will not suffer you and our little ones to want." To the church,\* at whose altar he ministered for twenty-three years, he has committed these loved and helpless ones! And may she see to it that the trust be not abused!

[\*No, it was to God, not the church, that John Wesley Childs committed his family. Had it been to the church, he would not have had such utter assurance that they would be cared for. -- DVM]

A short time before he departed to his long-sought home, our sister Childs said to him, "Husband, have you no word of advice and comfort to leave me and our children?" Looking steadily in her face, he said, with much feeling and energy -- "MY LIFE -- what more can I say?" It was enough! Yes, the life of John W. Childs is the best advice, and the surest comfort, that can be addressed to wife, children, brethren, and the world; and the richest encomium that can be offered to his character. For a life thus spent on earth, shall be rewarded in heaven.

And now may the richest blessings of a covenant-keeping God descend upon and ever abide with his family; and the mantle of his piety and zeal rest on us, his fellow laborers, for Christ's sake! Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE END